

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS:  
RITUAL, SELFHOOD AND SISTERHOOD

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by  
Nadine Brewer  
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by  
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Approved by Committee:

*Max D. Autrey*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Maxwell Autrey

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*Norman Hane*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Norman Hane

*Grace Eckley*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Grace Eckley

*Bruce Mart*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Bruce Mart

*Ben B. Stone*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Ben Stone

Locker

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An abstract of a Dissertation by

Nadine Brewer

May 1988

Drake University

Advisor: Max Autrey

In 1926 Elizabeth Madox Roberts published her first novel, *The Time of Man*, a work that plunged her into the literary limelight. A Book-of-the-Month Club selection and hailed by some as the "most beautiful piece of writing to come out of America," the novel established her as a major American writer. Subsequent novels appeared in 1927, 1928 and 1930. According to Sherwood Anderson, "by 1930, it was impossible to discuss American fiction without reference to Elizabeth Madox Roberts." By the time of her death in 1941, she had produced three more novels, two collections of short stories and a collection of poetry, all widely reviewed. Unfortunately, today much of her work is out of print and none of it taught in our universities. Such neglect of a major literary figure, noted by critics as eminent as Robert Penn Warren, stems from three factors: The questionable practice of labeling certain writers "regional"; the "misreading" of her oeuvre as "love stories"; Miss Roberts' insistence that only wholeness of the individual--not social nor economic studies and legislation--could regenerate the myth emblemized in the Kentucky Frontier and thus heal the "wasteland."

This study includes poems from *Song in the Meadow*, selected short stories from *The Haunted Mirror* and *Not by Strange Gods*, and four novels: *The Time of Man*, *My Heart and My Flesh*, *The Great Meadow*, *He Sent Forth a Raven*. Citations from the author's notes and correspondence held in the Appalachian Archives at the University of Kentucky, the Filson Club and the Library of Congress support the findings. Added support comes from travel to the regional setting of her work, thorough study of Kentucky history, and personal interviews with women who shared Miss Roberts' social, political and spiritual era.

Beginning with an Everyman figure in "The Sonnet of Jack," Miss Roberts takes her from "bare breath," through "points of contact" with others and her own inner self, to a self-defined, self-directed being in the last two novels. The heroes, most all women, are linked to mythic figures such as Dione and Prometheus, or to Christ. Their stories, centered in a single female consciousness, turn on mundane "rituals"--gathering eggs, falling in love, death, birth, naming, getting married, or the handing down of an object or of family history. By the development of the will as a spiritual energy to cut through the inertia of decayed myths and Patriarchy, these heroes reconcile their own duality, transform brute desires into nurturing love, transmute the violence of the past into creative energy, and find promise in the connectedness of individual and collective experience. Above all, they embody the creative power of the pioneer woman and connect her to the present. Their coming-to-being and growth of consciousness make these heroes worthy studies and their creator a strong voice for contemporary Woman.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every woman, strong or weak, may find comfort and encouragement in her. She is America's typical pioneer woman. She accepted pioneer life "with a heart for any fate" and met every situation. Perhaps she had something that we have lost for awhile and may well regain.

Stewart Roberts, M.D.

*Kentucky Medical Journal*, 1935

It was a chill December morning in 1809 when Jane Todd Crawford left her home near Greensburg, Kentucky to ride horseback sixty pain filled miles through the wilderness to Danville. A few days later, on Christmas Day, Dr. Ephraim McDowell would perform on her the world's first recorded ovariectomy--thirty-eight years before the availability of anesthesia, and fifty years before aseptic surgery. Twenty-five days later Jane returned home, again by horseback, to her husband and four children in their cabin home. Forty-six at the time of the surgery,

she would live another thirty-two years, dying shortly before her youngest son was elected Louisville's third mayor.

Heroic? Indeed, in every sense of the word Jane Todd Crawford was heroic, and in the heroic tradition--the departure, the initiation, or the slaying of the dragon, and the return. However, it was not until 1935 that she was honored for that heroism with a monument in Danville. Then, in 1942 the Women's Auxiliary Section of the *Kentucky Medical Journal* was dedicated to her memory, and the governor declared December 13 "Jane Todd Crawford Day." Today, the Jane Todd Crawford Trail and the hospital in Greensburg, also named for her, are constant reminders of her heroism.

As for Dr. McDowell, the "Father of Abdominal Medicine," a memorial for his medical breakthrough was erected in McDowell Park in Danville in 1879, and in 1900 he was nominated to the Kentucky Hall of Fame along with Daniel Boone.<sup>2</sup> Why was one honored so soon and the other forgotten for so many years? At the dedication of the monument to Jane, Judge Basil Richardson noted the inequality in the treatment of the two heroes:

The historian has dealt fairly and generously with Dr. McDowell and written of his achievements as equaling, if not surpassing those of the world's greatest surgeons, and incidentally refers to Jane Todd Crawford as an ordinary patient of a great and illustrious surgeon. Surely, in courage and in endurance and patience, hers was the greater part . . . she is an impressive model of the many heroines of the backwoods of her time.<sup>3</sup>

One reason for the historian's treatment of the two heroes is, of course, explained by the fact that the good doctor was a man and, as such, belonged to a fraternity, a brotherhood of heroes for whom a string of models and types stretched back through Daniel Boone and Captain John Smith all the way to Odysseus.<sup>4</sup> Jane, "Heroine of the Wilderness," on the other hand, seemed an anomaly, one of the "weaker sex" who had dared heroic action. However, Jane was not the only female hero on that early frontier; literally every woman who went into that Kentucky Wilderness, especially during those early years between 1775 and 1825, was as brave and as heroic as were Daniel Boone and those long hunters. Historians, however, have generally ignored altogether females on the Frontier. A. B. Guthrie relates that upon researching a story about the Oregon Trail, he began to wonder about the women, "the largely unsung heroes of the great movement to the West."<sup>5</sup>

Helen Deiss Irvin points out that what was true about the Oregon Trail and the West was also true about the Kentucky Wilderness:

Although women settlers came to Kentucky to stay in 1775, they are usually ignored in histories, as if they were invisible or their lives of little interest. They may be depicted, if at all, as passive and fearful. By these timid qualities they are defined as harbingers of a more "refined civilization"--in contrast to that of the Indians who used Kentucky as a hunting ground. But to learn of a woman migrant on horseback fording a swift river, one child in her arms

and one hanging on behind her, to find other women improvising a substitute for flax, defending a fort under siege, or fighting off Indian attackers, is to see women as active participants in the rough, precarious life of the settlements. Visible or not, "refined" or not, women helped settle the Kentucky frontier. And in doing so, many showed resourcefulness and courage that are seldom remembered.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, those early pioneers were courageous, hardy and resourceful, and their daughters would continue to be so. But nature's frontier was not any more difficult, and certainly not as long-lived, as the social, economic and political frontiers they were to confront in the next two hundred years. For though those early frontier women and their daughters tilled the land, built cabins, roads and fences, invented new fabrics and new methods for keeping foods and heating cabins, fought off Indians, managed plantations, businesses and schools, and later worked in factories, offices and public services, it would not be until 1894 that those who were married would be able by law to own property or make wills, one hundred and two years after Kentucky became a state. It would not be until 1910 that a mother would have a claim to her own child. And though by 1900 nearly 45,000 females over the age of ten were employed in state factories, it would not be until that same year that women would be given the right to their own earnings.<sup>7</sup>

It seems as if Kentucky women put one frontier behind them only to confront another, then another. But confront them they did, with as much courage as their mothers, grandmothers and

great-grandmothers had marched into the wilderness. These later heroes were as nimble at leaping over or detouring around social/political barriers as the early pioneers had been at fording swollen creeks and averting blackberry brambles, but we have heard as little about them as we did about their foremothers. When Kentucky women are considered, it is generally in the negative sense, either as victims of ignorance and unconcern, as submissive, browbeaten mountaineers, or as Bluegrass society belles who do nothing but kiss horses and drink mint juleps. However, there were many who were strong, capable and fearless who, out of concern for their sisters, fought for and won changes in legislation, medical care and education. These indefatigable heroes created an opposite end to the social/political spectrum.

The truth is that Kentucky women had begun raising their voices publicly for reform as early as the 1870s, and by 1888 had founded a Kentucky Equal Rights Association; by 1907 Linda Neville had started her war against trachoma in the mountain region; Cora Wilson Stewart, elected in 1911 as the first woman president of the Kentucky Education Association, had founded her famous "Moonlight Schools" for adult illiterates by 1909; by 1925 Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge had published *Women in the Twentieth Century*, still hailed by many as the most important work on the subject, and Mary Breckinridge had founded the Frontier Nursing Service at Hyden.<sup>3</sup> The list could go on to include those "average" women who were managing farms, working in factories and running small town businesses. There were



thousands of them but, like Jane Todd Crawford and those other "unsung" heroes, they had to wait to have their stories told.

Several excellent works attempting to refocus the past and point out the contradictions in women's history have appeared in the past few years. These studies delineate dramatically the disparity between the popular image of women and what women were actually doing, and most of them indicate the Frontier as the catalyst for distinctive change:

The reality of women's lives changed dramatically as a result of adaptation to frontier conditions, while the public *image* remained relatively static. Image, myth and stereotype were contrary to what women were actually experiencing and doing. The ideal for women in the late nineteenth century moves more and more toward a romanticized view of the wife, mother, and daily, if not of leisure, at least of withdrawn and demure refinement. If frontier necessity, practice, and even law recognized female economic and political independence, social custom and tradition ignored it. Despite a growing emphasis on women's rights, nineteenth-century writers overlooked--or at least chose not to draw attention to--Western life models on which other women might pattern their own lives.<sup>2</sup>

Historians were not the only Americans engaged in writing about the Frontier. Their guilt in misrepresenting the contributions of women on the Frontier must be shared with those fiction writers who included "heroines" in their works but

totally ignored their heroism. Feminine courage and resourcefulness seemed not to be the sort that attracted the early legend makers. Female heroics were seen as less exciting than "male heroics, such as killing bears and Germans, rescuing women from other men, and scoring touchdowns."<sup>10</sup> A few early works about women consisted of eighteenth-century captive narratives, dime-novel adventures of Calamity Jane or Annie Oakley, and some pejorative tales from the Crockett Almanacs about one-eyed backwoods belles who fought bears barehanded and wore buffalo skin petticoats. These last were set, of course, in Kentucky or Tennessee, unfortunate for women's history, since the influence of that early frontier created one of the most powerful myths in the modern world, the myth of the American Frontier Hero which has fashioned the yardstick against which much of contemporary behavior is measured. The dearth of role models is a direct result of an absence of feminine myths on that Western Frontier whose beginnings were established in the Great Meadow--Kentucky.

Kentucky was considered the West--and Paradise--until late into the nineteenth century: In his travels across America in 1851-52, Moritz Busch eulogizes the backwoodsmen of the West--Kentucky<sup>11</sup>; and the popular *Appletons' Illustrated Handbook of American Travel* of 1857 proclaimed that "the highest phase of Western character is doubtless to be found in Kentucky and in one view best illustrates the American in distinction from European civilization."<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, by the end of the nineteenth century much damage had been done to both the beautiful land so rich in game,

water and vegetation, and to those "distinctive Americans," who bore little resemblance to their brave ancestors--as much damage to men as to women, actually, though that fact is rarely pointed out. As had earlier works, later nineteenth-century literature and popular fiction which did have women at the center still gave a confused portrait of the heroine and did not follow reality.<sup>13</sup> It was not until this century that a subtle stirring began, nurtured by such women as Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Sarah Orne Jewett, Zora Neale Hurston, and many others, to save the image of women in literature from being frozen in some sort of fantasy combination of Hester Prynne and the "New Woman," both created by men. Works by these gifted women multiplied rapidly, but many were ignored, others lost, and too many mis-read.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts was the first and finest of those writers from Kentucky. Many have found her novels and short stories superior to those of Willa Cather and equal to the best of Earnest Hemingway and William Faulkner.<sup>14</sup> Though much of the praise is directed at her style, indeed extraordinary, her strong female heroes have not gone unnoticed. Creative, growing, self-directing, they are indicative of the startling change in female images in fiction after 1920 noted by Nicholas Karolides in his study of the pioneer in the American novel:

She has developed in the literature from a two-dimensional doll to a heroine who is full of life and a large enough figure to meet its challenges. . . . It is she who is the builder, the creator, the vital strength. . . . Another variant in the presentation of

the heroine is her attitude towards herself. Her concept of her role in the group, and her acceptance of herself change in the passing years.<sup>15</sup>

Miss Roberts' heroes indeed reflect the change, and do so without undue stridency about equality or the portrayal of woman as a browbeaten, submissive drudge or as an embodiment of "ideal womanhood." In other words, her heroes, like the pioneer women pointed out in Sandra Myres' study of the Frontier, are "neither the sunbonnet saints of traditional literature nor the exploited drudges of the new feminist studies."<sup>16</sup>

Miss Roberts' first work was not a novel, however, but a slim volume of poems, *Under the Tree*, published in 1922. In the next nineteen years she would publish seven novels, another volume of poems and two collections of short stories, the last appearing in 1941, the year of her death. Most of her novels were reissued in the 1950s as part of the twentieth-century series, and two of her works have recently been reissued by The University Press of Kentucky: The novel, *The Time of Man* (1982); and the earliest collection of poetry, *Under the Tree* (1987). There have been several critical books on her oeuvre: One book-length critique, *Herald to Chaos* (1960), by Earl Rovit, is excellent; several articles by F. Lamar Janney, Donald Davidson, Alexander M. Buchan, Mark Van Doren, J. Donald Adams, and an introduction by Robert Penn Warren to the twentieth-century edition of *The Time of Man* note her remarkable "exploration of consciousness" and "poetic realism." Penn Warren's introduction, later published in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, is included in the recent edition of *The Time of*

*Man*, in conjunction with a superb introduction by William H. Slavick, who is at present editing Miss Roberts' personal papers.

This study explores Miss Roberts' image of woman as hero in the real world from about 1775 to 1930, viewed in a richness of textures and perspectives rooted in daily life with its rituals and experiences of sisterhood; as "Everyman" who, from inner vision and outer challenge creates a Self that constantly recreates itself. With the exception of the earliest volume of poetry, her entire oeuvre discloses that "subtle process of psychic individuation leading to wholeness, freedom, wisdom, and an openness to the transcendent."<sup>17</sup> It also leads to an integration of collective consciousness and the coming-to-terms with individual purpose in racial history.

The manner in which Miss Roberts goes about her "subtle process" recalls Margaret Meade's account of a promising young aborigine artist who, upon first exposure to the interpretation of the world as seen in most Western art, exclaimed "Oh, now I see, you don't paint it the way you *know* it is, you paint it the way you *see* it."<sup>18</sup> Miss Roberts painted her world the way she knew it, and to read it in that same fashion, without superimposing received historical and literary images, is to reconnect to women's history and to know it. Then, to paraphrase Dr. Stewart Roberts, something that has been lost for awhile may well be regained.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A LITTLE CLOSER TO THE EDGE OF THINGS

Her whole body swayed toward the wilderness, toward some further part of the world which was not yet known or sensed in any human mind, swayed outward toward whatever was kept apart in some eternal repository, so that she leaped within to meet this force halfway and share with it entirely.

#### *The Great Meadow* (1930)

Diony, frontier hero of *The Great Meadow*, yearns to go to the Kentucky Wilderness, beyond the boundaries of human knowledge, to the very edge of the chaos of human experience. She longs to "find a new way of being," to "create a world out of chaos." Her powerful sense of identity with the goddess Dione and a "strong race of women," her eagerness to experience, and her growing awareness of her Self become her great strengths--so great that she takes in the force of the Wilderness, embodying the whole of it. Thus, Diony becomes the epitome of the Frontier Woman and, in her strength, the portrait of all Elizabeth Madox Roberts' Kentucky heroes.

Miss Roberts was undoubtedly as "Kentuckian" as are her protagonists. Born in Perryville, just west of Danville, in 1881, she moved to Springfield with her family in 1884. She was

to spend most of her life in the small Central Kentucky town, the geographical center of the state, drifting in the measured flow of history around Bardstown, Harrodsburg and Muldraugh Hill, formidable escarpment responsible for the isolation of so many generations descended from the settlers of the Great Meadow. Though she went to high school in Covington and much later, when she was nearing forty, to the University of Chicago, Miss Roberts always returned home.

It is this unassuming setting, this near-legendary landscape bearing a timeless, spaceless, archetypal quality in American history, that imbues all of her work: "But wherever she was, it [Kentucky] evidently underlay the outbranching experience, folded shadowily into the typical scenes of an author's life--an immense territorial ghost. Its past, still animated in her imagination, accompanied the present."

Miss Roberts' ancestors had come into the Great Meadow with the earliest settlers late in the eighteenth century. One of those pioneers, a hardy woman with an infant in arms, had been separated from her party during an Indian raid, but had survived to be found a few days later.<sup>2</sup> Miss Roberts' own parents, both school teachers, were strongminded intellectuals and passionate Confederates. It was into this pioneer, intellectual, Southern consolidation that Elizabeth was born. And she would be pleased with the remark that "she chose her ancestors carefully."<sup>3</sup> This heritage played a major role in the shaping of her genius. As Grant C. Knight observed, "the pen with which she wrote was a true Kentucky pen." Professor Knight was not being totally complimentary in penning that line, because in the same article

he takes to task Kentucky writers for being sentimental, provincial, unoriginal, for refusing to come to grips with the Negro and labor problems. He also criticizes them for reflecting the Kentucky opinion that "life is an occasion for pleasant living rather than exalted achievement."<sup>4</sup>

Though Professor Knight made some valid points in his criticism of Kentucky writers in general, as far as Miss Roberts is concerned he seems to have been suffering from what J. Donald Adams called "a complete lack of understanding of what she is about."<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, Professor Knight was not alone in his "lack of understanding." From the appearance of her first novel in 1926 to the date of her last publication and death in 1941, Miss Roberts was misunderstood by too many. This may seem a strange remark in light of the fact that her first novel, *The Time of Man*, established her as a major writer: Edward Garnett described her as a genius; Ford Maddox Ford called her work "the most beautiful piece of writing that has yet come out of America"; Sherwood Anderson declared that "no one in America is doing such writing"; Glenway Wescott, J. Donald Adams, T. S. Stribling, all acclaimed the novel. In addition, it was a best-seller and a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, as was her second novel, *My Heart and My Flesh*, published a year later. Indeed, "by 1930...it was impossible to discuss American fiction without reference to Elizabeth Madox Roberts."<sup>6</sup> Many contemporary critics consider her the forerunner of the Southern Renaissance, yet in the foreword to the 1962 edition of *The Time of Man* William H. Slavick laments the lack of "the large audience her



work merits" and the fact that "she is a nearly forgotten figure in American literature."

Why the lack of understanding, of the large audience, and of the recognition that a major American writer deserves? The answer just may lie, paradoxically, in Sherwood Anderson's significant statement that "no one in America is doing such writing," and in the questionable honor of being the harbinger of the Southern Renaissance. As an unknown writer in her time, Miss Roberts faced hurdles easily as formidable as ancient escarpments.

As a Southern writer whose work reflected her singular Kentucky bent, Miss Roberts was easy to label a "regionalist." Kentuckians are a decidedly independent lot, and their loyalties were not precisely aligned with those of the rest of the nation during the twenties and the thirties: The first--and last--loyalty is to the family, the clan, the roots, the solidarity of "kin"; next in line is the region, whether it be Central Kentucky, the Bluegrass, or another; after that comes the state, the sacred Commonwealth, followed closely by the South, "not quite a nation within a nation but the next thing to it."<sup>2</sup> Bringing up the rear is the nation, and following the horrors of the War and Reconstruction, that loyalty was and is avowed quite cautiously, if at all. All of which coalesces into a profound sense of place, of identity, of a "territorial ghost" that is nothing short of mythopoeic:

All young people wish to try the world and to find out adventures, but the young of Kentucky do not seem to look upon their region as a place from which to es-

cape. A pride in the place they were born. . . . Kentucky has form and design and outline both in time and space, in history and geography. Perhaps the strongly marked natural bounds which make it a country within itself, are the real causes which gave it history and a pride in something which might be named personality.<sup>9</sup>

However, that focused presence of place collided in Time with the romance of Progress, with a fragmented melting pot of a nation, determined to unify itself out of its regionalism and its straggling ethnic roots. It was, then, too easy to classify Miss Roberts' books "regional" in a day when that term was becoming increasingly unpopular.

Another hurdle she faced, considering the scope of her vision, was the fact that she was a woman, in addition to being a Southerner. J. Donald Adams compared her vision and genius to that of Virginia Woolf, Dostoyevsky and her successor, Faulkner--"Miss Roberts was writing the Faulknerian novel before Faulkner became an influence."<sup>10</sup> However, she was an American woman writing about American women, but not the popular images of Belle Starr, Annie Oakley, Scarlett O'Hara or any of the "new women" such as those played by Jean Harlow or Rosalind Russell. Her heroes were of the common lot, the country girls who stayed home, uninvolved in the rush to the cities, and they did not at all appeal to the popular audience. And the literati did not continue to take her seriously.

It is doubtful, though, that this last reaction was based solely on her gender or her regionalism. Her works are highly

complex, but subtly so. For example, most of her novels--and short stories, for that matter--can be read easily and superficially; some could be read and enjoyed by a fourteen-year-old. But on a closer reading, the mythic and cosmic proportions of the quest for meaning, of the Promethean struggle to affirm "beingness" on the abyss of "nothingness," become as apparent and as powerful as in anything that was being written by Malraux or Sartre and are reminiscent of the work of James Joyce, particularly in his *Portrait of the Artist*. In other words, her fiction, unlike that of Joyce, Woolf or Faulkner, does not announce from the outset that it is going to demand close and intense reading, so many did not, and do not, read beyond the surface story. Miss Roberts might have said of her stories what Flannery O'Connor said of her own, that she "could wait fifty, indeed a hundred, years to have one of her stories read right."''

But probably the greatest hindrances to any long-lived popularity amongst critics or the public of Miss Roberts' works were their affirmation of the individual human spirit, their unflagging faith in the transcending "we-ness of the race," and their female heroes involved in expanding their consciousness and defining their Selfhood rather than in active protest or escapism.\*

In a word, she was writing against the current of the times. The public was wanting quick solutions and release from individual responsibility--unions, pensions, social security, federally secured banks, guaranteed wages. escapist movies--whereas the literati were still caught up in their "wastelands."

their disfigured expatriots, their "Winesburgs" and "Main Streets," and preferred to view the rural American South as "wrathful" and stultifying, or as an Oknapatawpha, rather than as healing and spiritually uplifting. And they wanted to view women as either Daisy Buchanans and Brett Ashleys or as Ma Joads. It was "in the air" to lay blame, responsibility and salvation at the feet of *society*, not at the feet of the *individual*.

From the feminist perspective, Miss Roberts' heroes were seen as victims, as downtrodden, uninvolved in both society and the Women's Movement. Feminists would have preferred a Dorinda Oakley, an Edna Pontellier, or the hideously portrayed women in Edith Kelly's *Weeds*. They did not seem to realize that true strength had to be created within before it could be manifested without:

What was true in the world of literature was even more vindictively true in the world of actuality. There, even when the awareness of the desperate need for changing the economic and social arrangements was coupled with an awareness of the worth of the individual who was a victim of the existing order, the tendency was to accept the graph, the statistic, the report of a commission, the mystique of "collectivism," as the final reality. The result was that, in that then fashionable form of either-or thinking, the inner world of individual experience was as brutally ignored as by an overseer on a Delta cotton farm.<sup>12</sup>

For Miss Roberts, that "inner world of individual experience" is crucial, since the individual is the "focus where many men, dead or living, come together."<sup>13</sup> It is that world, *interacting with and integrating the outer world of space and time*, that catalyzes the growth in Selfhood and the transcendence of the human spirit on both the solitary and societal levels. This dialectical process provides a matrix for the entirety of her oeuvre, springing from her deeply held Berkeleianism, her conviction that one is "recreated from within, forever recreated," and her desire to give shape to her work, to create a pattern\*:

The difficulty is to choose material from the chaos about me and the apparent chaos that is myself. It would not seem to make much difference what one chooses, all things being equally important, but the *for what* is the vital problem...If I cannot trust the fibers of my being to make the pattern, to write it in its delicate tracteries, there *will be no pattern*.\*

The eventual pattern evolves--clear, poetic and unequivocal--out of the synthesis of her belief that the Self recreates the Self continually and the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley--her father's favorite philosopher. Berkeley held that the existence of both things and ideas "consists in being perceived" and the "perceiving, active being is what I call 'mind,' 'spirit,' 'soul,' or 'my self.'"<sup>14</sup> Miss Roberts put it quite simply: "Life is lived from within, and thus the noise outside is a wind blowing in a mirror."<sup>15</sup>

It is the constant action of the mind reaching outside, perceiving, bringing within and transforming sensation and experience--the "noise outside"--into thought and a "new way of being" that controls the movement of all of her work. It also ensures the possibility of creating ever anew the "pattern" of a life. But there must be a meeting between the polarities, the inner world and the outer, "a connection between the world of the mind and the outer order--It is the secret of the contact that we are after, the point, the moment of union."\* In describing her own work in her journal, she wrote that she had "tried for great precision in rendering sensuous contacts--the points where poetry touches life."\* Earl Rovit has described this "point," this moment of process-become-pattern, better than has anyone:

Her aim, both personal and artistic, was to focus on those points "where poetry touches life"--where mind and matter, idea and sensation, vision and fact, intermingle, shape and are shaped, and produce conjointly a flood of identity within the perceiving spirit, wherein the outer order is creatively absorbed and the world of the mind comprises a new universe. <sup>15</sup>

"Universe" here has both an inner and outer purport; that is, there is a new self-in-the-universe as well as a new universe-in-the-self. The question that comes to mind, then, is what comprises that "outer order?" What is the outer agent that interacts with the spirit in that "moment of union," and under what circumstances? Ellen Chesser, hero of *The Time of Man*, provides the answer:

The mountains grew more definite as she looked back to them, their shapes coming upon her mind as shapes dimly remembered and recognized, as contours burnt forever or carved forever into memory, into all memory. With the first recognition of their fixity came a faint recognition of those structures which seemed everlasting and undiminished within herself, recurring memories, feelings, responses, wonder, worship, all gathered into one final inner motion which might have been called spirit; this gathered with another, an acquired structure, fashioned out of her experience of the past years, out of her passions and the marks put upon her by the passions of others, this structure built up now to its high maturity.<sup>17</sup>

It is thus by having experienced her Self in herself, her own doings, her own ways of being, her own "time of man," in conjunction with the doings, the ways of being of Nature and of others in their own "time," that she has acquired growth and structure. Determinism does not exist in Miss Roberts' world, and one cannot inherit or acquire an identity. "Being is apprehended by way of beings qua beings."<sup>18</sup> And the entirety of Miss Roberts' works is directed toward developing a new "way of being," a new Beingness with collective implications though channeled through the individual. The narration may be centered in one consciousness, but discussions of the "race" saturate the dialogue. This new Beingness becomes possible only after the individual's present conscious frame of reference becomes meaningless, and the psyche experiences a new birth, usually a

larger rebirth than one isolated attitude or one relationship in the spaciousness of the novels. It is often the entire shell of the ego which is destroyed so that the hero develops a new center of consciousness. She experiences an intense Self-realization--her Self as individual, yet connected to all others; her Self as repository of memory and Time; her Self as Creator--and is able to integrate the two energies that bicker within the human consciousness, physical desire and spiritual aspiration. She is able to come to this wholeness because she embodies the Feminine Principle of creating life out of death. Indeed, Miss Roberts' oeuvre could be called the "feminization of the creation story." And just as that first story began with one man and his "points of contact," so does the new story.

As well as using the points-of-contact technique for the development of her heroes, Miss Roberts also uses it to create her "pattern": Her "sensuous contacts" on the story level are those moments when the self meets the Self either by choice, or because it is stimulated to do so by Nature or by the rituals and passions of others, the nature of the life process itself. Whatever the stimulus, recognition occurs within and creates a new inner order. That is why, though "her whole body swayed toward the wilderness," Diony "leaped within to meet this force."<sup>10</sup>

Miss Roberts' preferred means of limning those crucial moments are shared experiences and ritual: Rituals of daily chores performed alone or shared with others; rituals of the seasons and of joining with Nature; rituals of courtship and mating, of birth and of death; rituals of "telling" and of the



passing on of objects; rituals of nurturing, such as sewing, weaving and caring for another who is ill or in trouble; and the very important ritual of naming. Though these rituals are shared by all, and though the "passions" of all others help to shape the structure of the Self, the most pivotal moments are those shared by women, whether they be relatives, friends or neighbors, alive or dead. Thus, it is the sharing of ritual or experience, either in space or in time, usually between women, that acts as a catalyst for the heroes to develop a sense of Selfhood and become Self-determining, creative beings, "moving out a little closer to the edge of things."\*

Since all of Miss Roberts' work forms a cohesive vision--poems, short stories, and novels--themes, images, rituals, motifs and even scenes are always repeated (though the situations are not), and most occur in her poems in the seed stage. The vision that flowers so healthily in her novels and short stories finds its germination in her slight number of poems, written over a period of many years. All of the poems act as "points in time," momentary hinges precipitating conscious awareness.

In form and vocabulary, the poems are easily accessible; in vision and content, however, they are highly complex, dealing with symbols and concepts related to Existentialism and the new psychology. Therefore, a close reading--or re-reading--of select passages is essential in order to disclose the dynamic role played by ritual, as well as the steps involved in becoming alike-yet-different, a Self and a Sister.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SOWN THUS AS WILDINGS

The young Elizabeth had discovered at age eight that she was a poet: "Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a poet--and that's what I am--a poet."<sup>1</sup> Most of her poetic energy, however, she poured into her novels.<sup>2</sup> Aside from an early collection composed to accompany a volume of photographs of alpine flowers--*In the Great Steep's Garden* (1915)--she left only two slim volumes of poetry. The first, *Under the Tree* (1922), written mostly during her student years at Chicago, recalls her childhood through the eyes of the young girl. The second, *Song in the Meadow* (1940), published the year before her death, was written throughout the years, and it is in this volume that her vision is more readily perceived.

In her personal notes, Miss Roberts comments on her affinity for the art of other poets, among them Gerard Manley Hopkins, Emily Dickinson, Thomas Hardy, John Millington Synge, Shakespeare and Homer. Many have remarked the influences of these poets as they appear in her style, rhythms and even topics. Also noted have been the use of folk elements and rhythms. Frederick McDowell, though he appears to approve of the influence of Hopkins and Hardy, and does not seem to mind her use of folk material, finds that her "explicitly regional poems are mostly somewhat too relaxed in inspiration and too diffuse in form. They also reveal a vision too often deficient in force."<sup>3</sup> He does not list her "regional poems," but does

state that they represent nearly half of the collection. The "force" of her "vision" would be deficient indeed, as would the force of the collection, if one were to follow that line of reasoning.

Earl Rovit more accurately points out her resemblance to Emily Dickinson, a resemblance that spills over even into her fiction<sup>4</sup>: Focusing on the near infinitesimal to speak of the universal; creating startlingly apt metaphors; sensing so intensely each moment of experience; *seeing* so originally, so honestly that the critic cannot find words with which to critique, not to mention pre-formed theoretical boxes in which to wrap such creations. It was out of her intense sensitivity to and her passion for life, and out of her desire to penetrate beyond, "to increase [her] hold on all the outlying spaces which are little realized in the come and go of every day," that Miss Roberts avowed her own poetic kinship to the earlier poet: "And moved out a little closer to the edge of things, as did Emily Dickinson. For what is the white clover to the bee?"\*

Miss Roberts' use of "Dickinson" symbols pervades the short stories and novels: The bee and clover images from *Portraits and Daily Faces* mark major developments in Ellen Chesser, hero of *The Time of Man*; wind and spider images from *Experiment of Green* become paramount symbols of destiny, the feminine mind and the senses in most of the novels and short stories; and the "Hound of Identity" from *The Soul unto Itself* behaves in its metaphorical sense from poems to novels, "hounding" Miss Roberts' heroes to seek and define their Selfhood. Miss Roberts shared that sense of the "edge" with her predecessor and was

herself a great deal like Miss Dickinson's bee who was not concerned with "the pedigree of honey," because "a clover, any time, to him / Is aristocracy," in that she did not divide experience into desirable and undesirable; all of life, the joy and the sorrow, is clover to be transformed into honey.<sup>25</sup> All experience embodies the opportunity to "increase one's hold on the out-lying spaces," but a "point of contact" is necessary. Thus, in her poetry as in all of her work, that *point* is the focus, and it is often found in the every day world of her region.

"Sonnet of Jack," dedicatory poem of *Song in the Meadow*, marks the initial point, the generatrix:

I give you day, our day, any day, for entering

Man's time on the earth, his world, for cutting aslant  
through his track

At the crossroads here, bearing his heave-hoe aback,

At the point where his damned-to-perdition sin and his  
sheltering

Spirit join his throat-throbbing, bird-singing

Joy,--here, stubble-wise and tool-handed, into the day  
comes Jack,

Jack Plumber, Jack Plowman, Jack Scrivener, dowered with  
much or the lack

Of it, man-willed, washed up as beach drift out of  
protean weltering.

His friends, then with him, one to pull, take, haul,  
fetch and carry.

Come with himself, no less in the reckoning,--Bob,  
 Dick, and Harry.  
 Or woman-formed, dainty in dalliance or strong in her  
 childings,  
 Kate, Mug, or Prue. They, all, giving God praise, sown  
 thus as wildings,  
 Spread free of the bony house toward heaven, their joy,  
 his or theirs, say  
 What you will,--dead Friday and born again already  
 on Thursday. (3)

Jack is, of course, Everyman, always Miss Roberts' protagonist, notwithstanding the name, gender or circumstance: "Jacks (The Great Common Man--the pawn, the worker, the lover, the richman, poorman, beggarman, thief)," she wrote in her notes.\* The chance of birth, common to all "sown as wildings," and his individual "day" in the entire "time of man" place him at a point, a "crossroads." With him he carries his "tools" with which he must build a life, a structure. The crossroads turns out to be the point at which the anguish of the human condition joins the sheer joy of life. Being "stubble-wise and tool-handed," he knows that he "has his work cut out for him," and whether or not he has plenty or little to do it with, do it he must. And life itself is the ultimate. Ongoing life. Despite the suffering and limitations of the "bony house," Jack will create a life along with others, for he will always choose life.

Rather than a sonnet in form, this is a "hymn to life," with its images taken from rural Kentucky, its common, homely words and sustaining "-ing" endings. The hymnal quality is

reinforced by the reference to Friday but, happily, the language averts the sentimentality common to most Southern hymns. The poem thus becomes Miss Roberts unsentimental fashion of declaring her faith in the human spirit, what she calls the "human onward-going being" in the poem, "Conversations Beside a Stream." Moreover, beyond demonstrating her view of man, the "Jack" poem introduces some major themes and motifs appearing in her other works.

Her concern with human time is evident in the poem and is a concern that she shared with many major writers of her era. Her notes are rich in phrases such as "the River of Men's flowing life, his time," or "the great flood of life." Brief references remark "Eliot," "Mann," "Pound," "Yeats," "Turgenev," "Blake," and "James," and in one letter to Maurice Lesemann she called Joyce's *Ulysses* a "monumental book," a "book to ponder."\* Fluent in French and quite capable in German, she felt very strongly about style and the "training" of a writer and agreed with T. S. Eliot that "The only way to develop style is to read the great writers, past and present, to read as many languages as possible."\*\* She was, quite simply, a conscientious artist living in a time replete with innovative, experimenting, startlingly creative artists; it is impossible to determine the extent of their influence on her or of hers on them, but convergent concerns, such as time, self-affirmation, alienation, love, sexuality, memory, reality and brotherhood are as evident in her works as in those of her contemporaries.

"Jack Everyman," whom Miss Roberts sees as "indestructible finally in creative power," uses his power to create his Self.\*

There can be no greater creation, since he is the "point where all men come together." Thus, his individual Self becomes his "work of art," which, "cutting aslant through his track," stands "transecting, bisecting the world of time," in T. S. Eliot's words.<sup>7</sup> Miss Roberts might have said that "individual time transects collective time," and her reason for saying so would not have been religious as it was in Eliot's case, but her treatment of time is nonetheless quite similar to that of Eliot, as well as to that of Proust, notable in her novels.

Another of Miss Roberts fundamental approaches readily apparent in this poem is the pervasive sense of ritual underlying all human activity. Here, it controls the movement of the poem: Birth, daily work, sharing with and helping others, naming, worship, death. The necessity of "friends," or others to share with and help, is always present in her writing, clearly enunciated in "Conversations beside a Stream": "One man to himself alone / Cannot make a song," but ritual is far more than sharing, evident in naming (5-6).

The great import allotted the ritual of naming, carried almost to extremes in her poetry, finds its source in part in Berkeley's teachings that words, or names, do not stand for objects in general, but in particular. He demonstrates this point with a one-inch black line:

And, as that *particular* line becomes general by being made a sign, so the name "line," which taken absolutely is particular, by being a sign is made general. And as the former owes its generality not to its being the sign of an abstract or general line, but

of all particular right lines that may possible exist, so the latter must be thought to derive its generality from the same cause, namely, the various particular lines which it indifferently denotes.<sup>2</sup>

He goes on to say that words are not for communication alone, but for "the raising of some passion, the exciting to or deterring from an action. . . the passions of fear, love, hatred, admiration, disdain and the like," evoked by names.<sup>3</sup> Names, then, carry within themselves the emotion that they evoke, according to Berkeley. This conviction was surely reinforced in the young Elizabeth, because belief in the noumenal power in a name is as native to Kentucky as sassafras. It would be impossible to say whether such belief springs from the strong Celtic strain--the name of the clan--from the power given to the name of Jesus, or simply from the common method of establishing ties and roots on that early solitary frontier, a method which persists to this day. It is enough to say that Miss Roberts accurately acknowledges the ritual, imbuing it with creative power. Another poem in the collection, "I, Adam," in which Adam names the animals, combines the ritual of naming with the necessity of the "I," the conscious self as perceiver, thus the giver of existence (11-12).

The "crossroads" image heralds one of Miss Roberts' major motifs--roads. "Life began somewhere on the roads" (*Time*, 381) for Ellen Chesser, and six years before that book was published Miss Roberts wrote to Glenway Wescott that she had been working on a novel about a young girl named Sallie Mae.\* That eventually evolved into Ellen's story, but there was an



interesting remark concerning the earlier attempt: "I made Sallie Mae march down lifeways."\* The metaphor is not original, certainly, nor is it overdone as it could have been, and was in the gospel songs pouring through Central Kentucky church windows on sultry summer revival nights. The importance of "lifeways," or roads, is that they usually signal an inner transition. In the situations where a hero is changing domiciles or traveling, generally down country roads or lanes, it indicates a growth in consciousness, or the opportunity for such growth. In the "Sonnet of Jack," the crossroads signals birth, all births being equal.

"Man," as the poem clearly states, is both male and female, either "Jack" or "Kate," who is "woman-formed." There is no inequality between the sexes; they just represent two different kinds of energy, one might say the *yin* and the *yang*, clearly outlined in *The Great Meadow*:

Together, men and women, they went slowly forward, the  
men to the fore, the man's strength being in the  
thrust, the drive, in action, the woman's lateral, in  
the plane, enduring, inactive but constant. (GM 168)

The word "inactive" strikes a strange note, since the women in these works are anything but inactive, but the passage does explain how the two energies interact. It does not mean that male energy establishes and female energy "caretakes"; both energies are necessary to bring order to chaos and to maintain that order. Miss Roberts explains the difference in her notes:

There is much more to a woman than there is to a man.  
More complication. A woman is more closely identified

with the earth, more real because deeper gifted with  
 pain, danger, and a briefer life. More intense,  
 richer in memory and feeling. A man's machinery is  
 all outside himself. A woman's deeply and dangerously  
 inside. Amen.\*

Whatever the location of the "machinery," and however rich in  
 "memory and feeling," humans are all the same in both space and  
 time, no matter the gender, creed, rituals, race or social  
 standing.

Another poem in the collection, "A Man," declares that one  
 can "Start anyplace to construct a man": It makes no difference  
 whether his name is "Jack" or "Sue"; whether he is "Buying a  
 ship" or "wanting to steal a coat"; whether he is "Stalking a  
 white man down in the bush" or "saying his prayers"; or if it is  
 "Her first last time." Of primary importance is the  
 universality of the human experience, the "great body of the  
 true," what man does with the life he is given, and what he  
 leaves to the world to ensure its evolution:

A word, then, left to say,  
 In part.--What was it? gone.  
 The momentary sign.  
 He making this, then,  
 A way of life.  
 Branch, runlet, twig, rill.  
 Sing it or say, measure or tone.  
 He has left still the word, the sign.  
 The Word.  
 He can close his eyes.

He can smile.

He can cease to love.

He can take his way. (70-2)

It is natural that Miss Roberts should choose the "word" for man to leave after him, since it is by naming, or by the *Word*, that the pattern of life, or reality, is created. The word is the manner in which human experience is brought into being, and recorded, it remains. "Where there are no words for the experience, the experience will fall outside the limits of the real."<sup>10</sup>

A true believer in Berkeley's philosophy, Diony of *The Great Meadow* sees the word as having the same power to create as it does in the First Book of John. She experiments with this creative power in the poem, "Diony in Albemarle":

I thought of a word  
And the word became a tree.  
The word grew strong in me.

The word blew east  
In a wind from the west,  
Leaves and boughs  
And the bluejay's nest.

I went on the way  
Toward the far straw stack,  
And I tried to unthink the tree  
And I tried to take it back.

But I couldn't put it out,  
 And I couldn't leave it be.  
 It was made now forever...

An old sugar tree. (37)

Her experiment successful, Diony realizes that she no longer controls her creation. Once framed in actuality, it, too, exists and offers a tree's experience to the world of bluejays and such. A note of alarm is sounded here, since man's creations create in the outer world, carried by the "wind from the west." Wind, as usual a metaphor for the "noise outside," precludes the possibility of "taking things back."

The word, then, creates, but it cannot erase what Robert Penn Warren calls the "anguish of the collision with actuality," because that collision is necessary for growth.<sup>11</sup> "Ellen Chesser's *Dream of Italy*," stark portrayal of the contrast between dreams and reality, makes that painfully clear:

And I said: I will go there too;  
 Why shouldn't we?...  
 I'll walk a path down through a grove  
 And pluck an orange from a tree. (35)

The dream continues as Ellen imagines herself with "a gold dish in [her] hand," "in a shiny dress / A-walken down a marble stair." She also sees a "tall queen" who gives her "golden plums to keep," a significant image for the young Ellen of *The Time of Man* who longs for lovely women to emulate and to whom she can tell things. But upon awaking, she hears the "slow tap where the leak / Was dripping in the pan" and the relentless wind:

It was the slow tap of the rain,  
 And the wind was pushing on and on.  
 I heard it blowing on the board  
 Where the window pane was gone. (35)

The raw realism of the poem does not arise out of pessimism or despair. An ability to dream, the "hope of a fairer land," provides at times the necessary incentive to go on living, despite the tension that it provokes.<sup>12</sup> This inner tension produced by the urge to life and the urge to avoid the collision with reality--the primal scream of "to be or not to be"--is the focus of three other poems, all dramatic monologues. Two of them are in a child's voice. "Child in the Universe," which presents the primordial dilemma, begins and ends on the desire to escape:

Oh, Mother, draw the covers up  
 And fold the blanket over me.

My flesh is falling through the dark;  
 My hands are spreading through the dark;  
 I am a tree, a tree!

. . . . .

Oh, Mother, fold my shoulders tight,  
 And make my throat lie down to rest.  
 My feet are calling to the air....  
 And gather back my breast.  
 What is that nothing now I see?  
 Oh, Mother, draw the coverlet  
 And fold the blanket over me. (58)

The fear expressed in this poem springs from both the "dark" and the "nothing" of the unknown and the lack of a solid sense of identity. The speaker, who senses no separation between the self and the tree, feels herself being absorbed into the chaos around her. Despite the fear and uncertainty, however, the joy of life rises in the throat and the feet "call to the air."

"The Fox Hunt," an extraordinarily powerful metaphor for the conflict between the inner and outer worlds, goes beyond the statement of the dilemma, hurling the "why's" of confusion into the universe:

O Mother, why do the horns blow out?  
 And why do the hounds go by in the night?  
 The men and the horns are rushing by,  
 And the floor is white.

O Mother, they called down under my sleep,  
 And they found two dogs in an open space;  
 Stiff hair came out of trembly black;  
 Teeth looked in my face.

The wind is blowing the top of the tree,  
 And the wind is blowing the horses' feet;  
 It is blowing the moon across the sky--  
 They are running along the street.

O Mother, why do the horns blow now?  
 And why do the hounds run by in the night?

Why is the wind so full of words,

And the floor so white? (19)

The chaos of the outer world, or the fox hunt, unleashes an energy strong enough to "call down under sleep," forcing the child to awaken to experience. "Under sleep," may also be analogous to the subconscious mind. The force of this poem turns not so much on fear as on question: What is the purpose of all this? The answer cannot be given, however; it must be lived, as Emily Dickinson's poem, no doubt a clue to this one, contends:

Adventure most unto itself  
The Soul condemned to be;  
Attended by a Single Hound-  
Its own Identity." 10

"Condemned" to establish an "Identity," the Soul, which must constantly re-create itself, finds no sleep. Both the inner urge to life and the outer world provoke constant motion. Repeated verbs of action--run, rush, blow--imply swiftness, and the past participle sustains motion. The wind "blowing the moon across the sky" extends the action, producing the sensation that the whole universe is in movement, reinforcing the feeling of chaos. Adding to the confusion is the whiteness of the floor, because it is night, and the wind which, "full of words," paradoxically expresses the power of others and of Nature, as well as a creative force available to the speaker. Thus, to live is to be "hounded" to seek self-definition; there is no other choice.

Two possible resolutions to the dilemma--affirm life or commit suicide (which recalls the Existentialists)--are posited

in the poem, "The Lovers." This choice is also a pivotal theme in four of Miss Roberts' novels. However, since the affirmation of life is the only resolution for her, there is no true choice, but the poem does raise the question of suicide:

I said I will be  
 Beneath this tree....  
 But I loved life  
 And life loved me.  
 . . . .  
 I will be as a rock,  
 I will swiftly go....  
 But life loved me,  
 And life said "No!" (44)

The reciprocity between the speaker and life emphasizes the power of the "throat-sobbing, bird-singing Joy" in the "Sonnet of Jack," but it cannot eliminate the pain of experience:

Life gave me a sob  
 To be my fair,  
 And gave me a sorrow  
 To pin in my hair.

Then gave me a word  
 To be my troth,  
 And told me a rhyme  
 To weigh his oath.

My thought still clung  
 To the stony water,



The pool, I said,  
Will conclude the matter.

But life held me close  
In a firm embrace,  
Life cradled my feet  
And kissed my face. (45)

Even the creative power of the word is called into question in the face of the pain of reality. Finally, though, the only answer is life, an ardent lover.

Generally, in all of Miss Roberts' works, life experiences, touched off by those points of contact in space and time with others and Nature, are framed in major growth phases: Puberty, merging with others in friendship or in love, taking on the duties and rituals of adulthood and, the most important, self-realization--which process, of course, threads through all the others. Two of Miss Roberts' poems dealing with the first phase have as speakers young women perched on the fine edge of self-discovery, puzzling over the conflict between merging with others and individuation. In the first, "A Girl in the Twilight," a young woman measures herself in respect to other young women, trying to determine where they leave off and she begins. The whole monologue is set against a backdrop of the richness and exuberance of Nature:

Anna-Bell or Kate or Tee,  
Will they be the same as me,  
If my hair is smooth and curly,  
If I keep my beauty dearly,

If my life is like a feather  
 Blowing in a giddy weather?

. . . . .

I can hear a cedar tree  
 Sing a song, but so can Tee.

Anna-Bell is white as milk,  
 Glossy hair as rich as silk;  
 On her throat a yellow chain  
 Yellow on her hair again.  
 Kate is careless like a flower  
 Blowing on a windy shore.

Hear the turkey gobblers leap  
 The evening crying of the sheep,  
 Leap above the crying throats  
 Of the hungry little shoats,  
 Leap above the feeding din  
 Of the crowding cattle pen. (23)

Anna-Bell, Kate and Tee act as mirrors for the speaker, who is searching for herself. Identification with others is not negative or a habit to be avoided, because she says of Kate: "I can feel her joy arise / And see my laughter in her eyes" (24). There is joy to be found in others, but she has not as yet touched her own core, located the source of her difference. The verb "leap" acts as a mirror also, reflecting not only Nature's hunger for life, but also her hunger to know herself as well as life. In the next three stanzas she continues her vesper

rituals of gathering eggs, watering "Pretty Pete," the horse, and watching the twilight "put a loving cloak about / All the hens that linger out." But the hens remind her of Anna-Bell's milky skin, and the questions "leap" back to her mind:

Out and out and up and nether--  
 All our laughters keep together.  
 Who will say where she begins?  
 Set us into rows like pins?  
 All our wishes make a lender.  
 Borrower is only spender. (24)

This lovely passage is reminiscent of both "pretty maids all in a row" and e. e. cummings' "in Just-spring," when "eddieandbill" and "bettyandisbel" come running in inseparable pairs of childhood. And, as if the "queer old balloonman" had appeared on the scene, the next two stanzas announce the speaker's discovery that she is trembling on the edge of young womanhood:<sup>14</sup>

My beauty is a singing bough  
 That fans my breath and makes it grow,  
 A shaking bough that trembles on  
 The little sliver of a moon.  
 Sends a kiss and sends a laughter  
 Out to meet its own hereafter.

I will fold my beauty in,  
 Catch it with a golden pin.  
 Fold my beauty with my cloak,  
 And fold it underneath my look:

"Woman Weaving" is another poem that, though it might be termed "regional," evokes the power of love through the ritual of weaving. Miss Roberts herself was accomplished in the ancient craft which she discusses in an interview:

Weaving is hard work. . . . I put as much of myself into a piece of weaving as I do in a story. . . . It's really the same process--repeated in a different medium. You have certain things you want to say. You may say them with words, or notes, or colors, or lines. . . or colored yarn.<sup>15</sup>

She emphasizes the importance of line, saying that "color is purely relative. . . . But in line I see the absolute, the making of design."<sup>16</sup> Again, it is the design of life that is the focus, a design motivated by love and created out of nurturing, protective daily rituals:

I hear the slipping heddles,  
And I feel the changing treads  
That lift the warp apart and set  
The pattern on the threads.

The owl apast the tower,  
Will whimper at his wrong,  
That grief should be arrested  
Within his mating song.

His slow, bodacious singing  
Will praise and curse and grieve,  
But one will miss the terror

In the plenty of my love.

Here, the weaver controls the pattern, thus controlling life, but not willfully or haphazardly. Conscious of the sounds and the changes, she adjusts--creatively--the warp, and weaving becomes a metaphor for a nurturing love powerful enough to damp the terror of the outside world. In *The Great Meadow* the act of weaving grows into the major symbol of woman's power necessary in the establishing of order--or pattern--on the Frontier, foreshadowed here in the control the woman has over the weaving process.

It is evident that many of the poems could be termed "love poems," just as all of Miss Roberts' novels and short stories could be termed "love stories." For her, though the affirmation of individual being and the growth in spiritual consciousness are the *sumum bonum* of human existence, there must be an underlying motivating force. That force is love, "the elemental energy in life," and the absence of love augurs death.<sup>17</sup> Of course, that elemental energy is, in the most biological sense, essential to the "onward-goingness" of the race.

Miss Roberts called love "the kelson of creation," an interesting metaphor.\* The "kelson" does indicate rudimentary direction, balance and harmony, and without it there could be no progress. But there is a curious note sounded in her particular use of the word. "Kelson," in Kentucky, is another local name--archaic, but still in use--for a ridge, those upthrusting shale deposits that have withstood the onslaughts of man and the ages in the ancient karstic geology of Central Kentucky. They interlace and intersect, divide and define the hollows and the

Knot my beauty with my sash,

Shade it with my drooping lash. (25)

"Beauty" here, as in all of Miss Roberts' writing, refers to a sort of *sexual presence and awareness*. The hero, aware of her sensuality and of her attraction to the man, is cloaked in an aura that she owns, can control and can share. She has not found a love as yet, but she has discovered her "beauty" that sets her apart from the others and, in the exuberance of youth and life, decides to take life as it comes and accept whatever the winds of experience bring:

I will take what is to find,

And lay three kisses on the wind

To see what they will bring to me,

And count the stars above the tree

To riddle out their seven weathers,

Throwing them my silver feathers. (25)

Another poem, "Maiden in Love," has an erratic movement that follows a "shall-I-shall-I-not" confusion as the lover draws nearer and nearer. The speaker begins in uncertainty when the "love is at the shutter," and makes a decision: "I'll gather back my giving." Then, as he draws nearer, she smooths her hair. When he arrives in the entry, the two urges clash, and she says, "I'll take back my yielding / And set my beauty out." Love wins, of course, as she says, "I'll let my beauty flower." Thus, the "beauty" of one's sensuality, coupled with love-- Nature's way of making certain there is a "time of man"--is strong enough to overpower the fear of losing one's Self in another.

meadows, and dictate the locations of villages, farms and roads; they confine and protect, deprive and nurture; they hinder encroachment and promote local ingenuity--and ignorance. In themselves, they are a paradox and create paradoxes, depending on what one does with the experiences they offer. And one might say the same things about love as Miss Roberts views it. And it is just possible that, true to her "territorial ghost," she intended a different interpretation of the word "kelson" than is generally meant. In the poem, "Love Went Riding," the warmth and power of love is contrasted with that ancient landscape, cold, gaunt and hard, increasing the probability of the metaphor:

Hard boughs stand, gaunt on the plane tree,  
 Twigg'd on the elm. The cold sun  
 On the dusted bark. Then the ledge knew,  
 And the sun on the cliff stones knew,--  
 "Warm love went riding, two and two."

The cattle eat at the hill's rim.  
 The swine drag at the turf, and the sheep  
 Pull the frosted sward.  
 Snakes lie within asleep.

Cold lips of stone, and the spent sun  
 Of the dark of the year.  
 Old seas locked into rock, and the shell ledge knew,  
 "Warm love goes riding, two and two." (59)

The winter landscape "knows" that it is love that warms the earth. The scene is stretched into cosmic time with the "Old seas locked into rock." It is by the two that all is created, that the warmth of life comes to earth and even to the sun. But that love does not seem limited to the two after it is created.

In the poem "Love in the Harvest," love spreads out to include all others and Nature herself. It is from the last two lines of this poem that Miss Roberts chose the title for the collection: "A song in the meadow and a song / in the mouth." Love, then, is reciprocal not only between beings, but also between beings and Nature, the first Creator: "Terra--the first, the earliest, the most ancient oracle, the most profound deity."

<sup>13</sup> However, that reciprocity does not take place automatically. Genuine love--love that is nurturing, life-affirming, creative and re-creative--cannot spread to others, cannot be shared, until a conscious awareness of the soul, of Self, has been experienced. That very awareness is motivated by the love energy which sparks love and acceptance of the beauty of the Self:

[Love is] the force itself which brings man to the points where poetry touches life, where one's very selfness is created. The moments of union--the vital experiences of truth, of virtue, of beauty--which mark the successive spirals of growth for the individual spirit, are themselves love-created.<sup>14</sup>

The persistence of the force of love and the critical instant of self-awareness are outlined in two other poems. The



first, "Self-Haunted Girl," returns to the question of individuation and the compulsion to confirm an identity:

The birds are in the air now to make an arc above me,  
 The trees along the fence-rim are marching, one and one.  
 Who is she that walks now across the sunny plowed land?  
 The trees along the hillside are bent against the sun.

Who called now from the stones above the quarry?  
 And what is the name that they say?  
 The sky is all a blue thing that crooks above the country,  
 A blue wing that crooks to make the day.

Who is she that looks again and stops again to listen?  
 Who walks the mill path beside the running leat?  
 The plovers overhead make a crying in the sunshine,  
 The stones along the path waver underneath my feet.

Is it Kate or Mary-Lou or Anne or Jo-Eliza  
 That's walking now the pasture where the shorthorns go?  
 Is it Tom or Anna-Bell or Ephraim or Susan,  
 Or Lester J. or Piety or Joe?

The cows will lift their heads now and watch me as I pass  
 them,  
 They look at me with level eyes and let their eatage wait.  
 They turn beyond my vision while I skip along the creek  
 path,--

Who is this that stops beside the gate?

You couldn't pluck a wild rose, it withers in an hour.  
 My shadow makes a tall girl go walking down the grass.  
 My shadow takes the wind in its skirt and in its bosom,  
 It bends along the snag bush and crumples up to pass.

Is it Anne or Anna-Bell or Kate or Jo-Eliza?...

You couldn't pluck a wild rose, it withers in your hand....

It bends about the snag bush and crumples up and passes....

Who is she that's walking through the land?

The speaker is obviously in tune with Nature and the "sunny plowed land," but separate from them. However, she is not certain about what that separation is, not certain about her "name." She is haunted by the Self's need of definition, and tries to determine where she differs from both the land and others. And again, Miss Roberts blends male and female in the names.

In the fifth verse, some intimation of Self begins with "I," and the cows are aware of some difference because they stop eating to look at her "with level eyes." But her dilemma returns: A "wild rose" will wither quickly if plucked from its bush, its roots, its environment. It must mature and die in its own way, but what is its way? This line also underscores the ephemeral aspect of man's time on earth. The shadow is a favorite motif of Miss Roberts, usually reflecting an early phase of Self-realization as well as a physical maturing. The "shadow" accepting the "wind" also announces a willingness to accept experience, but the "snag bush" will "bend" the shadow as the trees are "bent against the sun."

The use of the "shadow" evinces a marked Jungian influence that reappears in the short stories and the novels, especially in her approach to the individuated Self, the presence of an *anima mundi*, and the polarized yet complementary relationship between the consciousness and the Self, or the soul. It is not surprising, then, that her use of "shadow" implies the first awakening to consciousness: "But if we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has already been solved: we have at least brought up the personal unconscious."<sup>20</sup>

The speaker in the poem, quite aware of her shadow, is in the process of becoming aware of her Self. The final stanza restates the entire problematical process of growing into adulthood: The confusion of being the same yet different, the brevity of life, the pain of experience, and the fundamental question of "Who am I?" The solution to the dilemma is provided in "The Meeting," probably the most significant poem in the collection, which limns the moment when "the consciousness meets the soul":

I walked to the door  
On the blossoming sward;  
Overhead on a bough  
Blew a singing bird.

I left the song  
And the tree and the wind;  
The day and the herbs  
Were left behind.

A spider had built  
From post to post,  
And over the way  
On her silk she crossed.

I asked not her leave  
To sever a vent.  
I broke the web.  
And beyond it went.

I set my foot  
On the topmost stair.  
I heard a breath  
From beyond the door.

A step came on  
From the farther place.  
My foot,--and a tread  
Within the close.

My hand goes up  
To reach for the latch,  
And a hand inside  
With identical touch.

Blue eyes look in  
At the cloudy glass;  
Blue eyes inside

Look out of the house. (85)

In the midst of a "blossoming," "singing" world, there is a "door." The speaker deliberately makes the decision to leave that world and the "wind" behind. The third verse introduces Miss Roberts' preferred and most famous metaphor--the spider and its web. The spider emblems the human mind, primarily the feminine mind, and its web the senses; thus the young woman in the poem is deliberately going beyond conscious awareness by her breaking of the web. Refusing to be blocked by her senses, she pushes her way to the "cloudy glass" of her own soul. She is much braver than Miss Dickinson's speaker in "I years had been from home" who "fled gasping from the house."<sup>21</sup> Miss Roberts' poem, a reaction to the negative connotation in the Dickinson poem, is marked by a wonderful decisiveness--reinforced by the meter--which characterizes the movement of the poem; the girl is resolute in her quest. "The mind requires its fulfillment. One cannot avoid the demand."\*

The fifth verse introduces the word "breath," synonymous with life, or the "motion and a spirit, that impels/ All thinking things, all objects of all thought,/ And rolls through all things."<sup>22</sup> The fusing of life and breath in an earlier poem, "A Man"--"his first wild cry at the pain of breath"--also intimates that life comes from the "Source" lying beyond the individuated consciousness.\* "The Meeting" implies that the soul is indeed "deeply within," and that it takes effort and determination to find it. The final two quatrains limn the critical instant of the self meeting the Self. The change from past to present tense emphasizes the immediacy of the girl

standing before the "glass," as the adjective "cloudy" emphasizes the mystery of such a meeting. Also a development of the earlier "shadow," it later evolves into more distinct reflections in the water or in mirrors for most of Miss Roberts' heroes, as they look "inly upon the wonders of [their] inner part, pushing [their] gaze deeper and deeper."\*

"Cloudy glass" and the turning back upon itself of the last strophe notify that one glimpse of the soul is not sufficient, that the gaze must be pushed ever deeper. "Meetings" thread through the novels like a refrain: "I reach two ways. I wind till my breath meets / My own breath, the return / And the departure," Jeremy sings in his song in *Jingling in the Wind* (256). The ritual of the inner-outer meeting provides the crux, then, of self-renewal and growth.

Thus, it is life itself, the dilemma, that secures the warp on which each soul winds out and back upon itself, breath meeting breath, until the design is completed. And the creating of that design is never easy, as Miss Roberts states quite emphatically in her poems, and perhaps even more emphatically through the struggles of her protagonists. Courage, dauntlessness, and an absolute willingness to accept life as it comes, in an evolving spiral of rebirth, are what she requires of her women. They all struggle in the perplexity of "reaching two ways"; in the grip of conflicting urges; in the joy and pain of a "shadow" that takes the wind in its bosom only to come upon a snag bush; in the frustration of pushing their gazes ever deeper and deeper, despite the profound intuition

that they will ever join in Ellen's poignant cry in *The Time of Man*: "I wish I knowed for sure" (88).

However, the struggles, pain and confusion of Miss Roberts' heroes would not have seemed unfamiliar to those Kentucky women living in the same era under the same circumstances. Indeed, the warp that she gives her heroes is the same warp that Kentucky women had to build on in the first half of this century, especially in the rural areas. Her collections of short stories, *The Haunted Mirror* (1932) and *Not by Strange Gods* (1941), her last published work, offer an introduction to those warps and delineate the process by which the hero reaches--or does not reach--self-realization and self-direction through ritual, sisterhood and the continuing affirmation of life.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### ENLARGING THE CAPACITY FOR EXPERIENCE

Early in her career, about 1930 or '31, Miss Roberts voiced doubt about the efficacy of the short-story form: "I do not think that the 'short story' is a satisfactory form or that anything very good can be done with it," she wrote in a letter to Marshall Best.\* However, when her first collection of seven stories, *The Haunted Mirror*, appeared in 1932, J. Donald Adams entitled his review "A Master of the Short Story."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the second story in the collection claimed second place in the O. Henry awards. And in 1965, Louis Auchincloss wrote: "What is hard to understand is why the form of the short story did not strike Miss Roberts as a better tool for her purpose than the allegorical novel."<sup>2</sup> Other critics disagreed, and certainly her short stories do not surpass the novels in any way. However, they develop and substantiate the images and themes begun in the poems and serve as somewhat of a bridge between the poems and the novels. Most of the stories focus on "meeting," a choice between growth and either death or stagnation, catalyzed by ritual. Usually the protagonist is a young woman, but occasionally it is a young man.

The most celebrated of the stories, "Sacrifice of the Maidens" (O. Henry Award) from *The Haunted Mirror*, probably earned its popularity with its subject matter--and with its lack of "regional" emphasis. Though it may not seem the most gripping nor the most beautifully crafted of the stories from a



contemporary standpoint, Adams notes that its "sustained delicacy of mood and beauty of execution" make it a "flawless performance. It takes two themes, subjugates them to a single mood, and binds them into an indissoluble whole."<sup>3</sup> And that it does. Felix Barbour, on the brink of manhood, just awakening to the beauty of women and to his own sensuality, watches as his sister, Anne, takes her vows to become a nun. Felix, dismayed by her decision, is struck by the "strangeness" of the ceremony in an "unnatural dusk": "He had known in a vague and troubled way that this would be the end of Anne."<sup>4</sup> As he watches, his mind is flooded with memories of her "from first to last," as a child and as a blossoming young woman "precious to all men" (34). He sees in her the abundance of Nature, as abundant as the years and "a wide field of corn" (35).

As the postulants walk down the aisle, Felix remarks the girl walking beside Anne, a tall girl "whose wreath fit[s] with a fine grace over her brown hair" (39). He is enchanted by the girl and yearns to know her name, "longing then for her name, for some word that would signify herself and name his own delight in her" (*italics added*). He sits anxiously awaiting the moment he will hear her name, clutching at the thought but "haunted by an unrealized disaster that threaten[s] to arise from some hidden part and bring the whole world to a swift consummation" (44). At last, the priest begins calling the girls' names and Felix feels "a leaping in his heart to know that he [will] hear the name of the lovely girl" (45). Her name, Aurelia, when called, fills his "mind" and his "senses," but the

priest drones on, replacing her own name with another, "Sister Mary Delores":

The world broke and disaster followed. The ashes of a burnt-out creation rattled and pattered down endless cliffs of shales and Felix was aware of the rasping breath in his throat. . . . (46)

Continuing the disaster, the priest reaches the last of the postulants, Anne, and gives her the name of "Sister Magdalen," on which name the story ends (47).

It is not surprising that Miss Roberts should write such a story; ritual and ceremony delineate most of her scenes and she was strongly attracted by the "art" in Catholic liturgy.\* Moreover, two convents were located near Springfield, one just a mile outside of town; therefore, the pageant of the "taking of the veil" was an annual neighborhood event. The contrasting themes of the young man leaping forward into life and his sister rejecting life simply reiterate the poems.

The essential drama of the story, however, is played out in the names and in the incontrovertible power of the Word to give life and to take it away. Indeed, in most of the stories and novels this power is as imminent as it is in "Diony in Albemarle" and "A Man," though not as prominent. The first story of the collection, "On the Mountainside," signals this power. Newt, the main character, is a young man who has learned the wonders of an education from a teacher come and gone. Before the teacher came, sounds had only served to tell him what was going on or what was being said; now, Newt listens intently to "noises" and "sounds" which give "him some comprehension of

all things. . . yet unknown. . . the what of happenings and sayings. . . stood back beyond some heightened qualities" (11). The "sounds" and "noises" developed into the Word become the "what of happenings" in the story of Felix and Anne.

The ceremony begins with the "many-ply voice of the congregation" chanting "as one being." The priest then begins and the congregation responds: "The priest at the altar would begin. . . but on a word, a Word, the congregation would break over him. . . (31). This continues until the "swift words," the "thundering word," the "intoned word," of the priest overwhelms those of the people, reducing them to "the ashes of a burnt-out life" (32). But from the ashes rises a new creation:

The great intoned word again, and the people are alive. A great rush of human living and all sprang into life instantly in one act of creation while the immense thundering word under them was a power to push them forward and on. (33)

This ritualistic pattern of death and regeneration repeats itself as the "great wheel of the Rosary rolls" over the people until the moment Felix recalls Anne's announcement that she was going to become a nun, "standing by the door, making a departure to fit her words":

A creation had been destroyed; it was falling away now into a clatter of weary death in the hurried leavings of old sayings that dropped from the mouths of weary men. But the priest had opened the earth anew and brought out a new dark vigor of life. There were re-

membered ways of girls in his leaping words of creation. (37)

It might seem that this new "dark vigor" leads to new life but, as the organ plays--"not passionately, as in a human wedding"--and the priest begins to name the girls, he takes "back all he had given" (45). It is then that the postulants become the "ashes of a burnt-out creation" in their very names.

The name of Anne's partner, "Aurelia," meaning "chrysalis," holds the very essence of transformation and new life, but henceforth she will be a "woman of sorrow," joy forever denied. Anne, whose name means "grace," also implying promise, will bear the name of "Sister Magdalen." At first glance, one is tempted to relate this name to that of the prostitute forgiven by Jesus; Miss Roberts, however, to whom all natural acts of love and sex and procreation were the fundamental affirmation of ongoing life, and who so minutely researched her material, would never make such an error. She played on names and symbols, piling connotation upon denotation until a prism developed, refracting myriad possibilities. The most evident denotation or interpretation of a symbol is, therefore, often misleading.<sup>5</sup>

"Magdalen" is the name given to the late Paleolithic period from which date so many of the cave paintings in southern France, paintings of a dead culture found in caves full of tools made of bones and flint, recalled in the phrases: "ashes of a burnt-out life," "dusty patter," "rattle of voices," and the "ashes of a burnt-out creation rattled and pattered down endless cliffs of shale." These sepulchral images are interwoven with the fecundity of Nature in Felix' memories of Anne amongst

"plump calves," "turkey hens," the "lilac bush," her laughter on the wind. Thus, it is fitting that the story end with the name "Magdalen." Anne is mimicking unregenerated rituals, taking a vow on dead rites, rejecting all that Nature has offered her, and is "sacrificed" to the rattle of "old sayings" in a ceremony long since impotent of any power to re-create, if indeed it had ever wielded any.

Professors Harry Campbell and Ruel Foster agree that the story ends on "the death note," although they see that as a possible indication of the author's Protestantism, which is quite doubtful.<sup>6</sup> Few of Miss Roberts' works deal with religion, and those that do remain on the level of the rituals, usually dead ones. She clearly declared her attitude toward Christianity in a letter to Glenway Wescott: "Would I have to give up my agnosticism to get into a popular magazine? I will not."\* Furthermore, she had a horror of her poems being seen as "little moral Butterbeans with Stevensonesque slants."\* Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Anne's story makes any positive statement about the Church, or even that it has any religious or moral overtones.

Anne, rather than accept the pain of experience and life, escapes to the safety of dead rituals intertwined with the murmured "hour of our death" (32). She will not discover her "beauty" and, by denying her own emotional and sensual nature, forfeits all possibility of self-realization. In an earlier recollection of her announcement Felix recalls that she "had risen suddenly, flinging back from the doorway as she stood in the act of going" (32). This reverses the action of the speaker

in the poem who, in deliberation, goes toward the door, an action repeated in the final story in *Not by Strange Gods*, published nine years later.

"Love by the Highway" opens with Perry Lancer, Anne's opposite, who is digging potatoes in a field, singing all the while:

The land was made for the living.  
 The sea was made for the dead.  
 My love will come from the highway  
 When the sun is high and red."

Perry has been "buffeted about by the fates and the weathers."\* "Married out of hand" at age thirteen by her mother to Joe Lancer, an old man past seventy, she shares a fate not uncommon to a poor rural girl of her era (235). Now, eleven years later, old Joe Lancer is lying in state in the house, dead, while she is so overflowing with life she even feels a tenderness toward the potatoes, "as some thought of the young and the helpless accompanied her concern for the fruit she had taken from the earth" (227). Despite the misery and pain of experience, Perry, instead of choosing safety or an alternative identity signaled by another name, lives in hope. The litanies of those sitting with the body, a "droning sound," contrast with the happy sounds of Nature and Perry's song--the contrasting themes of life and death, this time not created by words, but ritualized through them--a song that does not issue from stupidity or naivete:

"I waited a long time. . . to be young. First I was a child, and the old man called me his wife in front of people, and smacked me behind the kitchen if the

dinner was not enough. Then I was an old woman, tied up in rags, and I counted the eggs and made one off the old man if I could" (227).

Her song springs from a love of life and faith in what it has yet to bring. Being "buffeted about" has not instilled any bitterness or desire to escape in Perry. She has "served her duty out," and now she is in no hurry: "There was time enough. . . Tomorrow she would be mistress of the farm and would have eight hundred dollars in the bank as well" (227).

As she continues to dig and sing, she listens to others passing along the highway talking of a woman, Alma Poore, who is to speak that night at the schoolhouse on "what's wrong with the world" and what causes wars (228). She hears one say that Alma has a "rover" for a husband. Listening to the murmur of the conversations and continuing to sing, she is startled as a man slips up behind her and folds her in a firm embrace. With his "pretty" talk, he tells her she smells wonderful and that he "could drink glory out of [her] pretty shoe," then invites her to go with him "to the other side of the hemisphere" (230-31). Perry, bedazzled, but thinking him someone she knows, replies that she would go anywhere with him if she knew his identity. When he does release her, she realizes he is a stranger, but he looks like a "fine man," and to Perry it seems such a "strange good thing that this talk would be happening to her," she invites him to sit so they can become better acquainted while she digs. He responds that all he wants is to "take a walk to the green of yonder hill" (233).

Perry, shuddering "in delight, "hopes that this may be the love she has awaited, but her mind takes control:

"In all that sweet talk you gave me you never yet told me your name, but you got mine slick as a new ribbon."

"Peter, 'tis, Peter Prunt. But names are not very much one way or another."

She puzzled a little over the name. . . . (233)

Perry's suspicions are aroused, not only by his name, but by his attitude about names; in addition to taking them for "not very much," upon hearing her name, "Peregrine," he had responded to its most apparent meaning--"a wandering woman" (231). Dropping the topic of names, Perry decides to tell him her life story, to which this narcissist replies that he "never care[*s*] to hear the story of anybody's life," a response that adds to the girl's belilderment (235).

This passage highlights both "what's in a name" and the very important ritual of "telling," shared by every pair of lovers in Miss Roberts' works. Perry is obviously aware of the importance of both, and the critical question is whether or not her physical desire will overrule her good judgment. And it almost does, but as neighbors begin passing on their way to hear Alma Poore, one mentions the speaker's name. Upon hearing the name, Peter abruptly leaves off lovemaking and begins frantically begging Perry to hide him. Poor Perry, comprehending that this scoundrel with the lovely talk is Alma's "roving husband," is shattered: "I was willing to go to the



other side of creation, but he only meant. . . the top of the hill. A tramp that knew how to talk like a book" (240).

At first angered, she calls the dogs; then, cunningly offering to hide him, she leads the sweet-talking rogue into the house and announces to those inside that he has come to read the "Prayer for the Departing Soul" (241). Leaving the astonished Peter beside the dead man, Perry soon finds solace in herself and in Nature: "Anger has cured her hurt" and she takes up her song and her life (243):

None has sent me a letter,  
And none has given me a ring;  
But love will come by the highway,  
When my heart begins to sing. (244)

The Word and names, though highly significant in this story, play a secondary role to Perry's wholeness. If she had allowed them to, Peter's words could have brought death, even as the words of the priest brought death to Anne. But Perry is not like Anne, even though her quest is also religious--implied by her name, Peregrine, or "religious pilgrimage," a meaning that the flighty Peter did not infer. The freedom tacit in the name stems from her spontaneity and her acceptance of Self and of life, attributes which Anne lacked. Tried by life and "matured by the passions of others," as well as by her own, Perry knows and accepts all of her being, including those parts that happen to be emotional and sensual. She is as self-determining and unafraid of life as her name implies.

Miss Roberts exposes her sometimes bawdy sense of humor in the names of Peter Prunt and Alma Poore. A "prunt" is a small

glass ornament with no practical function, a fact that could not possibly have been overlooked by the author. Alma, of course, is "soul poor," but because of her roving husband, most probably think of her as "poor soul." Though the names seem rather contrived, they are amusing and reveal the grotesqueness that sometimes lies beneath rural decorum and reticence.

There is something of far greater import in Peter Prunt's name, however. The crucial test of all Miss Roberts' women involves their own sexuality, the part of them that "reaches toward life" (*Heart* 252). They cannot become self-determining "creators" until their choices cease to be based on phallus worship, the foundation of the patriarchal system. To allow oneself to be controlled by unregenerated physical desire is to submit to the flawed system. And those desires, like rituals, can only be regenerated individually. The "ornamental" aspect implied in Prunt, reinforcing Peter's "pretty" talk and the implication in Alma's name, reveals the sham Miss Roberts saw in most marriages, a concern pervading all of her work. Perry, who obviously has not enjoyed many "pretty" things, is also strongly attracted physically. But she imposes the order of the mind to the chaos of desire, thus becoming material for heroism. This is not to deny natural urges, because all that is natural is good, as Anne's story, placed in diametrical opposition to Perry's, reveals. However, the rituals of sexual activity and marriage can be as deadly as those of the Church, as the account following Anne's story, that of Joan, signals. "Scarecrow" is both the title of the tale and Joan's nickname.

The story unfolds on two themes: The invalidism inherent in the failure to define or integrate the Self; and the effeteness of unregenerated rituals. As usual, the narrative begins with a homely ritual--Joan is gathering eggs and, in the middle of doing so, she stops, "listening for some fact that might be more true than the fact of her hand" (95). She is introduced thus on the threshold of self-discovery; is there more to her than a body? She has not yet reached the "shadow" stage of awareness, because the shadow acts as a mirror reflecting the Self back to the Self, and Joan has not experienced a "reflection": "She had grown tall at some time when no one was noticing how she grew, not even herself" (101). Nor does she see herself reflected in others:

Joan saw again her mother's strong, thin hand going into a basket...The care of the hand that went cautiously into the basket, feeling for surfaces, lifting an egg, turning one aside gently...these lay now with the eggs in the nest, and Joan touched them with her thought. (96)

. . . . .

Joan turned Betsy's reply about in mind and adjusted it to what Betsy continually said. . . . (99)

. . . . .

It was late summer when she observed that she and Tiny and Betsy were three women now. (103)

Not only does she not see herself reflected in others, she only sees the outside of others in what they do and say. She never identifies with her sisters in a "bettyandisbel" fashion and she

never questions the "why" of anything. She "walk[s] in the path. . . [that winds] as feet have made it" (96), and waits "to be told what to do" because, as the youngest, it is "her continual office" (99). But she is content with doing as she is told, considering her daily chores "without care, happy among them" and, since she "feel[s] them with the senses and with memory," exhibits both emotions and the ability to retain and recall (97).

However, since birth Joan has permitted no one to touch her. Her mother gave up "trying to wash her or comb her hair when she was four years old," and at "less than a year old she'd push your hand off" (97). Joan's "touchiness" is an oft discussed topic among her sisters and her mother, as is marriage. Joan does not discuss marriage, of course. She enjoys the farm, her chores and her principal "office"--to run as fast as she can to chase the crows away from the corn when her father calls, "Joan! Joan! The crows! the crows! . . . Come quick, Joan. The crows!" (101)

There are two fields to protect from the scavengers, so one summer Joan makes a scarecrow for the upper field:

. . . the image as near to a likeness of herself as she could, using her habitual clothing, and she tilted it forward as if it ran through the field as she continually ran. (108)

She intends to make another for the lower field, but until that time, it is she who must guard the new corn from the crows.

One day, while she is guarding the tender shoots and half asleep, Tony Wright, whose "smile [is] a creeping, three-

cornered crow's foot that quiver[ed] at the side of his mouth," comes along and makes love to her (105). Joan experiences all the carresses and loving as if in a dream, as if it were the scarecrow being touched:

. . . and thus she saw, as apart but near, the image, herself, flinging up its arms. . . .

The image was built of a bony frame over which was drawn a quivering curtain of skin and blood. Three smiles walked under the tent of shrinking skin and began to fondle the blood. The image screamed lightly when it was touched, but the touch made its horror drunk, so that horror flattened to a plane and then drew downward and inward to a line or a thread that lay as an unwilling serpent crushed beneath a weight of willing blood. (109)

As all this is taking place, the crows come and eat the young corn. Tony, elated at his conquest, feels as if he has "the whole world in [his] hands," but Joan, "herself the world, the sheaf gone off of it," feels "tender and unprotected." When she awakens fully, "anger and renewed horror" making her strong, she fights him off and runs home (109-10).

The incident disorients her completely, and she feels no longer a smoothly functioning part of the farm routine; rather, like "an unrelated gadget pitched awkwardly through the utensils and through the prescribed hours" (110-11). Her sister and mother, "sure and final in all," decide that the following Tuesday Joan will marry Tony (112). On the wedding night, Joan, who has seen "into a remote future. . . [and] rejected it as

being her own," takes a knife and conceals it in the bodice of her dress (114). When Tony, who has seen her take the knife, does not come back in, she goes back to her parents' home, "walking back to her own way of life, to her own scenes and places, less to the people than to her place among them, to the admonitions that fell lightly over her head and made rightness that flowed with the air she breathed and was as little regarded" (119).

Once at home, however, her mother, Chattie, decides with Tiny, the sister, that Joan is still Mrs. Tony Wright, and that tomorrow she will go back. "She [has] married marriage and they [are] satisfied" (121). Joan begins to scream at that, "in great panting whispers," and her father, who has thundered in, saves her:

"Joan, she's not bound to marry where she's not of a mind to. . . Let Tony Wright stay away from here. You all hearken to what I say. Joan, she's not married. You leave Joan be." (122)

Professor Frederick McDowell calls Joan a "frigid woman," but that is unlikely.<sup>13</sup> She likes all the young men and "want[s] them to be near her" (106). Moreover, her senses are developed, she loves Nature and its "fulfilled life" (103), and sometimes when she goes to chase the crows she sings, then the words fade and the "blood. . . prevails" (102). When Miss Roberts uses "blood" in this sense it usually signals sexual readiness. In the novels, when a young man is "full of blood" he is ardent and ready for a mate. Therefore, Joan does not seem frigid, but rather a girl frightened by life and the possible pain of

experience, and who chooses to let the voices of others define who she is rather than "push her thought inwardly."

At the very beginning of the story, when she is gathering eggs, she notes that the "setting" hen is nearly "wasted of her strength, her feathers dull and ragged, her body thin" (96). Later, Chattie questions how Joan "got borned, firstplace. To get borned is a right touchy matter" (98). And so it is, and it takes strength from the mother, leaving her "dull."

Other factors then begin to accumulate: Chattie, for example, knows everything and is "always right"; her words "roll swiftly through the air. . . as true as the air itself. Chattie and rightness [run] together through the air" and, true to her name, Chattie never ceases being right all the time she works, which is all the time (100). The father's voice, when it is heard, is "a great rough voice" that breaks "through the outside air and beat[s] roughly on the house, a voice that belong[s] nowhere inside" (101). In addition, he shares being "techous" with Joan whom he has helped confuse:

Since she was a small child her father had made a helper of her for himself, since he had no boys. He seldom talked to her, or to any other, but he knew that, following his great outcry, "Joan, Joan, the corn!" the field would be tended (103).

Thus, the father's voice tells Joan what to do outside, and Chattie tells her what to do inside, a stream of orders because they are "a house full of demanding life, and all outside themselves exist[s] for them. . . a house demand ing bread for itself" (100). They are a well functioning, mechanical, purely

materialistic household with the force of life divided between the father outside and the mother inside, both of them performing their duties very well--with no evidence of emotional or spiritual union. Joan, as the product of this divided house, does not know whether she is female "under the tent" or male--the knife--and can come to terms neither with others nor with her Self. She sees herself only as a body, as the scarecrow, the truth of her hand, "her ear ready for the cry of the door" or "the beating of her footsteps" (97). She never integrates the outer with the inner.

Tiny implies Joan's fractured personality early in the story when she says "Joan scares crows away with one hand and waves howdy-do to the whole flock with th'other," exactly what she does with young men (102). The phrase is repeated after the incident with Tony, as Joan sits against the chimney "seeing the tall image of herself in the field of corn and planning how she would make another as true as the first" (111). Thus, there will be two separate images of Joan in the field reflecting the two separate images of Joan in herself. In her inability to accept her sexual nature, she will remain a child, the woman in her unrealized, thus unintegrated. And her childish "office" of waiting on the others will continue because, in "her place among" the others, she becomes mechanical, fixated. She is then a reflection of the perfunctory rituals of the household.

The story exposes the perversion of ritual which Miss Roberts viewed in the same light as had Giambattista Vico; that is, as a basis for a growth in consciousness." The purpose of



ritual is to provide a touchpoint by which the individual meets others (and Nature) in space and time:

Beyond naive wonder and the deeper wonder at the growth of selfhood, there is a sense of life as ritual even in the common duties, as an enactment that numenously embodies the relation of the self to its setting in the community, and in time.<sup>10</sup>

But unless that "enactment" is life-affirming in the individual, it becomes repetitious and effete. For Miss Roberts, ritual suffuses and controls both the direction of her stories or novels as well as the growth in consciousness of a hero, but only as a *moment* which permits her to experience her Self in relationship to all others in space and time, the collective. Therefore, in order for the ritual to have any *individual* meaning or transformative power, the hero must *make it her own*. It can become either a *punctum saliens* or a *punctum defunctus*, because rituals find their source in myths and, as with myths, they must resonate within the individual who comes to life at their touch and simultaneously imparts life to them. To become involved in a ritual is to regenerate it which requires a conscious awareness of Self<sup>11</sup>.

Joan has no Self. Therefore, the rituals of daily living do not "numenously embody" anything: "Telling" has become "telling to do"; nurturing has become duty or "office"; marriage is functional and conventional--"get a good home and plenty to do with" (99); and birth simply a biological accident for "techous" people. Even the ritual of "handing down," so emblematic of frontier life--whether it be of teachings or of

things--has taken on a purely materialistic coloring. There is no "amness" in these people; there is only "doingness." No wonder, then, that Joan is going back to "her place." She is an image, created not out of love, but out of duty and function. And she cannot create in her turn, because without experience there will be no Self. She becomes the "child in the universe" of the poem as her father, responding to her cry, "draws the coverlet."

Many critics have noted the Freudian symbolism in "Scarecrow"; it is clearly possible, just as it is possible that the pattern for the story came from Jung's *The Relationship Between the Ego and the Unconscious*.<sup>12</sup> But its resemblance to William Blake's *Book of Thel* is most astonishing. One might imagine Joan crying out "Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?" as she flees back "unhindered" to her "own scenes and places," her own "vales of Har."<sup>13</sup>

The story of Rhody, "The Betrothed" (*Not by Strange Gods*), also begins with a young woman on the edge of self-discovery--and again it begins with ritual:

The fine things that were put away were brought out to be aired, and Rhody's mother told her that the Rose of Sharon quilt would be hers when she married. Julie, the mother, had made it during the first year of her married life, and Homer, the father, had cut the patterns for her. (181)

Immediately, the themes of sharing and interconnectedness appear, woven into the rituals of marriage, telling and handing down. The house is not divided--both mother and father work

together. But most important, there is more than a quilt being handed down here; a portion of Rhody's own history is being handed down in a moment of sharing and understanding. Julie, who shares marriage and a sense of community with her husband, is now sharing those with her daughter via telling and the quilt. She is also acknowledging her daughter's womanhood and her recognition of their Sisterhood:

In the gift the mother confirmed the daughter's liking [of Kirk Brown] and gave dignity to her playfulness. Her mother had thus confirmed something more, had assured her of it. (182)

The sense of interconnectedness is augmented by the presence of Lilly and Ruby, Rhody's younger sisters, who play and run about "as one creature" (182), and by the "telling" of the quilt pattern that has been "in the family for five generations" (183). Julie is ritualistically offering the opportunity to connect with others in family memory, an awareness essential for total self-realization:

Upon this inheritance the odors of old centuries continually blow out of old books [or quilts, or cloaks, or lanterns] to join what is kept treasured thus within, what is identical with the breath of life. These confirmations of things held in family memory give a pleasurable sense of one's own validity, as if, having known by the way of the senses, one knew again by the way of the summaries of human experience. . . . one projects himself into more than one century and

knows what it is to be alive in a reach and breadth of existence that transcends three score years and ten.\*

Rhody's rites of passage, more complex than those of Joan, include the "summaries" as well as the "growing pains" inherent in the human condition. As if to predict her own as yet unfulfilled contribution to the "family memory," she notices three brown spots in the corner, and Julie explains: "That's where I plucked my finger with my needle while I sewed to bind the border" (183). The quilt is spread over Rhody's bed, but its significant connection to family in both pattern and blood is not as yet fully understood by her. She loves Kirk but, still subjectively oriented, is not consciously aware of the need to connect, still walking "out of step with his stride" as they make wedding plans, even though the "focus" is on their connected hands (186). Since they have grown up together, it seems natural for them to marry; however, she has not quite made the leap from playmate to mate, feeling the horse "pushing her forward. . . unpleasantly and not unpleasantly" (188-89).

Rhody is going through the same shall-I-shall-I-not sequence as the girl in the poem, but her ambivalence is provoked not by fear of human contact or of vulnerability as Joan's was. Her fear arises out of her womanhood and its ramifications in connection to past and future. She sees her mother who is "one with her office" and is not sure that she wants to be like her; then, glancing at her grandmother, she shrinks from the "image, rejecting it entirely," silently declaring that she will never be like her grandmother. Indeed, she has not "yet consented to be as her mother" (193).

The internal conflict generated by the process of individuation (the desire to be alike yet different) from those in the past as well as the present extends the conflict of the girl in the poem "The Self-Haunted Girl" into eternity, because Rhody, recognizing her "beauty" and accepting her Self as vulnerable and separate, now she wants to remain at this stage. Taken together, the short stories dramatize the human desire to fixate at each point of conscious awareness in denial of the inexorability of time. Rhody, like all humans, resists the acceptance of her own mortality--"forever is now" (191). Her natural urge is to fixate as Joan did.

The conflict comes to a climax on hog-butcherer day, when she is asked to help her grandmother search out the sweetbreads from two great tubs of entrails. The grandmother enters into the task with pleasure, plunging her hands into the tubs in a most revolting manner. Then, despite the girl's demurrals, she insists on telling Rhody's fortune in the entrails:

"Life begins here," she said, squeezing a clot of blood with her fingers and holding up a small white cell. "It's not worth half the fuss folks make over it." (201)

The old lady continues, reciting stories of "mortality, of bloody bearings," until Rhody, sickened, runs to her room and clears it of all that reminds her of the wedding, including the quilt--"she cannot fit her mother into the world of the vats" (201). But she does not succeed in shutting the distasteful scene out of her mind. "Her grandmother had opened some shut place and had half revealed some real substance. She [is]

afraid of what she had seen" (203). Rather than face the "substance," she vows never to marry, to "be rid of animal life forever" (204).

This is another echo of Blake's *Thel* as she despairs of living, "only at death to be the food of worms."<sup>14</sup> To be mortal, especially to be a woman and a mother, is to be vulnerable to others, to the constant reminder of death, and to "animal life." Julie wisely and lovingly continues preparations for the wedding, but the frightened girl runs away to her sister's home, which she finds more confusing. Vic and Joe have horrible brawls, yet maintain they love each other; the children, stairsteps who seem to "have sprung from the vats," are neglected by Vic, yet they never cry or fight and seem blissfully happy. Nothing is as the confused Rhody thinks it should be, so one night, during an especially nasty fight between Vic and Joe, she leaves and promptly gets lost--her outer confusion mirroring the inner.

After indulging in a brief moment of hysteria, she realizes that she may as well cease looking to others for clarity:

She could not clearly restore to mind the image of her mother's face or reproduce her father's care and strength. These seemed to be things which were but dimly known, were never otherwise sensed. They were a part of the prettiness of existence, her need now being for her to find her way out of these dense entanglements. (213)

Pain and confusion accompany the separation of the Self from the "prettiness of existence," from the ease of dreaming and plan-

ning without responsibility and risk, in the vain hope that time will forget. As Joan did, Rhody has tried to run away from her "hound of identity," though for vastly different reasons. She has enjoyed the nurturing of a loving, united family, not one formed out of duty and a social code of conduct. A nexus of sisterhood supports her in space and in time. Her crisis has been set off by shared rituals, clearly delineating her own relation to the "Human, onward-going being." Youthful rites of passage may provoke self-recognition through pain, but the alternatives are stultification and the forfeiture of self-direction. Rhody chooses to find her way out of the "dense entanglements" and "prepare[s] the way" for Kirk (221)

Names have great import in this narrative, and an interesting contrast is evident between Kirk and Tony Wright of Joan's story. Kirk is "romantic" and an "honest, law-abiden man," obvious in his good Scottish name meaning "church" (190). Therefore, he is as sure, as pastoral, and as evocative of the tradition of the folk as "the little brown church." Tony, on the other hand, is curiously compared to the crows: His crow's-foot smile is attractive to Joan, and he makes love to the "tender" Joan while the crows are pulling the "tender" corn. Something suspicious is implied, possibly that he is a scavenger, given Joan's eternal infancy.

Stories such as those of Joan, Rhody and most of her other protagonists have caused Miss Roberts to be deemed less than praiseworthy in her choice of plots, most of which are "love stories" set in a rather isolated world. Little action or worldly noise intrudes into her world of pastoral harmony, and

her families never stray very far away from their beginnings. No exotic scenes titillate the reader, and nothing truly dramatic takes place in the same sense that it does in, say, *Gone with the Wind*. Miss Roberts imposes strict limitations which fit tightly about the core of the story and squeeze, intensifying instead of broadening, focusing instead of scattering--an ingenious method when one's subject, plot, characters and setting are the human psyche. This method is much more in evidence in the novels, where the action stretches over a much longer period of time. John Cheever uses a similar method in some of his short stories, notably "A World of Apples." Great panoramas and earthshaking battles are not needed for such. Furthermore, if potential for growth exists in direct proportion to the intensity of the relationship, the family provides the most plausible material, because, in Jung's terms, the mother and father provide the primary imagos.<sup>15</sup> Succeeding them is the lover, and love being the motivating energy in the universe, what better force to incite the hero to growth and overrule the ego's desire to fixate?

"I Love My Bonny Bride" is another of her "love stories," with the interaction of family members and lover providing the surface conflict. This story does vary from the others somewhat, however, in that it is unique in setting--the city--and in point of view. The action, most of which centers about "Aunt Patty's" approaching visit and subsequent wedding, has its "telling" through Lena, Patty's eight-year-old niece. An intensified use of what Erich Auerbach calls "binocular vision"



[my translation] in his work on Gustave Flaubert and Petronius, it eases the centripetal force so evident in the other stories, allowing room for more social implications.<sup>10</sup> Lena is portrayed reacting from the standpoint of her generation to the adult generation as she sees it.

The story begins with the children--four boys, Lena and the baby. With the exception of the baby, they are anxiously awaiting the arrival of a beloved aunt. Upon learning from their mother that Aunt Patty is going to marry Hiram Thomson, a man with a "black beard and black eyes and hair like the wings of a raven," the children decide that they do not want him. They have seen an image that fits his description in one of their mother's paper-back romances--"she-books":

Here was the same head as seen before but now it was a spider in the heart of a great web.

"Is it a man? It's a spider. It's a man like a spider." They were all speaking.

"I found Hiram in a she-book."

"It's the picture of a bad man. He's the bad thing in a she-book."

"Hiram is the bad thing inside a she-book. Now I'm gone." Allie went down the stairs.

"Gi' me the book," Lena called out.

"Goddie-mightie," Jed said again. (53)

Patty is the family favorite, and this scene foreshadows the family's mistrust of Hiram when he is late for the wedding. The spider image is repeated after the aunt's arrival. Patty loves to sing songs and tell stories to the children, and

whatever she is singing or telling, she has the facility of playing a role so well, she takes on its image: ". . . she looked first like Aunt Rhody. . . and later looked like the good old gander. . . . Patty looked just like the beautiful lady when she sang" (65-7). Thus, when the topic of discussion turns to Hiram, Lena sees a frightening image:

. . . the face in the she-book. . . in Patty's face. .  
 . . The face was more present than Patty's own face.  
 It leaped out of Patty as if it were within Patty and  
 were as much her own as her own face might be. (69)

What may seem here a discordant note recalls the spider motif intimated in the poem, "The Meeting." Patty, as the "spider of culture" who "eats her husband"--as the spider does in *Jingling In The Wind*--has chosen and already "absorbed" Hiram, containing him within her mind. Lewis P. Simpson sees Miss Roberts' spider as symbolizing woman as artist, "God symbolized as feminine mind." "Considering Miss Roberts' closely held agnosticism, "God" may not be accurate, but the feminine mind is the creative and ordering principle in her works. However, in Patty's story the motif is not as fused with the structure and vision as it usually is. It does function to destroy the happy scene with the children as Lena becomes hysterical over the spider illusion, no doubt meant to presage the family's hysteria when it appears that Patty is going to be a jilted bride--"No woman-person ever lives down such a fate" (89).

The plot moves at two levels of time, lending itself well to the movement from ritual and Selfhood to Sisterhood. Lena is

the child-woman learning vicariously about the affirmation of life through her aunt, the woman, who is experiencing a "collision with actuality" in which she must either affirm or reject life. The pivotal "points of contact" are again effected by the three rituals of marriage, telling and handing down. The antagonists are the collectives of time, symbolized by the clock, and an obsolete social code founded on superstition, symbolized by the "voices of the house."

Lena has already a budding sense of Self and an excellent memory, though she does not do well in school:

Lena read the words "Remember Me" on her cup and she remembered herself. . . .the letters made a maze to Lena and told her nothing. Memory told her suddenly all that she wanted to know. (45-51)

This notifies that "learning" comes from more than books, that perhaps those "summaries of experience" held in "family memory" and that the remembrances of "self" are just as important in the overall pattern of human history as is a formal education. The importance of memory as a link both to the past and to another in the present is picked up again as the family waits for Patty's stage. Lena projects herself "across the miles to the other house, where Patty live[s]. The other house [becomes] very vivid on an instant because Patty had come out of it that morning," unifying the two females in thought (54).

The day before the wedding, as Aunt Patty takes Lena to see the wedding clothes, "the hour [has] a secret feeling running through it" (71). Patty talks of Hiram and as she shows his photograph, his face is again superimposed on hers, causing the

little girl to declare that she does "not like to see a man have whiskers on his face";

"I'm afraid that you do not like men very well anyway."

"They do very well out of doors. But I do not like to have them come in the house. Except Father, and he's different." (73)

Patty promises to leave a picture of Hiram so that after becoming familiar with it, Lena won't mind if he comes into the house sometimes. To which Lena, still the child-woman, voices the ego's need for the world to remain securely in place: "But when the wedding is over he will go on away and you will be Aunt Patty, just the same, and we'll forget it ever happened" (73).

The next day, dressed and waiting for the ceremony to begin, Lena experiences a lovely moment which hints at the self-realized woman she will become:

Lena thought of herself and remembered that her name was Evalena. . . . There was a beautiful song which she remembered, and which she thought fitted her exactly.

Dear Evalena, sweet Evalena

My love for you will never, never die

Evalena and I, one evening in June.

Took a walk all alone by the light of the moon.

She had never had such a walk, but she thought it would be a pleasant thing to have, all alone, only Evalena and herself--which was herself with herself--

and a walk which would make a pleasant way to pass off a quantity of time. (77)

The content of this extraordinary passage might well have come from a novel written by a fine contemporary feminist writer. Lena states her sense of Self as separate both from others and from her usual conscious awareness. Moreover, she avows her love for that Self very clearly.

As the waiting continues, the social voice is introduced: "an ancient custom," a "home marriage," "Sacred Wheat," "fecundity rites," "black magic," "lucky and unlucky days"--superstitions around the ancient rites of marriage (79). The single guest, Mister Henderson, introduces time with his pocket watch. Lena wonders what makes "time go at all"--Hirum has not yet arrived and tension is mounting "as if time were being held back by some hard grip. . .from everybody's tight face and hard nerves" (80). The clock strikes two, the hour for the ceremony, and there is still no Hirum. From that moment on, Time and Voices control the momentum of the story:

"Who is this fellow that makes our Patty wait. . .?"

The large hand of the clock was creeping upward. . . .

"I never could confidence a man that couldn't come on time for his bride. . . ."

"I'm afraid Patty's romance was short-lived. . . ."

The clock had struck three. . . .

Suddenly time began to go fast. Lena wanted now to hold time back. . . .

"The damn fellow. . . ."

"It's a disgrace. . . a bad fate on a woman

(83-7)

The voices continue to tell "the sinister or happy fate that makes a destiny, the fate that speaks in time of stress through human tongues, through the Human Tongue (87). The traditional role of woman is announced--"a woman learns to take life as it comes"--but Patty, as a "spinning spider" in control of her destiny, is not traditional, as she informs Lena:

"Did you faint because Hiram would not come?"

"No. Hiram will come."

"And what made you get sick, then?"

"I had a bad shock to know how all the house distrusted Hiram and distrusted Life. Nobody believes he will come but me. It was only five days ago he was here. And then he said to me. . . ."

"Is it bad luck for a bridegroom not to come at the time?"

"It might be. But I am not afraid of bad luck. And Hiram is not. We are not even afraid of Destiny. . . . He said to me not one time but twenty times or more, 'I love my bonny--. . . .'" (89-90)

The "voices" of the "suppressed and angry house" cannot restrain Hiram. Detained by a storm that had deposited four feet of snow, he arrives three hours late. Within twenty-five minutes, the nuptials have taken place and the bride and groom have left. Later, as someone goes to fetch his picture, it is gone. Patty has "taken every trace of her bridegroom with her out of the untrusting house" (95).

The loving scene of sharing in Sisterhood between Patty and Lena, simple as it is, supports the entire narration. Patty is a strong woman who refuses to give her power away to time, to social expectations, or to the belief systems of others. She is in control of her own destiny in a day when moral, religious and social codes governed most women's lives. She affirms her Self and, in a strong affirmation of "Life," she hands down her strength to Lena, who shows promise of being quite capable of realizing her Self and carrying on in her own time. In one brief "telling," Miss Roberts has limned the origins of women's limited status and predicted the changes that were to come, changes effected by strong women such as Patty. Moreover, she has given her blessing to those changes--all without stridency or whining, no small accomplishment.

At the time *Not by Strange Gods* was published in 1941, women were making great strides in regaining the power they had held on the early Frontier. Another Kentucky writer, Harriette Arnow, said that she hated seeing women "emerge from the Eighteenth Century," that they had had "more power than now."<sup>1</sup> Though Miss Roberts rarely addressed social issues overtly in her writing, the social climate informed her work--as it did in the portrayal of Aunt Patty, and in the novels--a very sound reason for creating strong heroes and for setting most of them down in rural areas. At the opposite end of the spectrum, those women who could not--or would not--develop spiritually and harmoniously within themselves and take control of their destinies in the outer world were not neglected. Indeed, Miss Roberts seemed to work best from either a completely positive or

a completely negative posture as far as the inclination of her heroes are concerned.

It is the *via negativa* that she takes in "The Haunted Palace." Jess, the main character, represents the inability to create of an unawakened being. The title was obviously taken from Edgar Allan Poe's poem of the same title, and the story is easily reviviscent of Poe's macabre tales, though, as always, Miss Roberts avoids gothic overtones. An extraordinarily powerful work, it is undoubtedly one of the best pieces she ever wrote--for craftsmanship, social value and revelation. The story begins with "The House," and its author explains why:

The House is the point of view, or has the point of view. The action then moves into the mind of the ignorant. . . woman. . . . This is the 'haunt' that Haunts the House.\*

The House, an elegant and peaceful estate named Wickwood, had once been owned by a well-to-do family that raised horses. Wickley family members had been gracious, exuberant and creative. The House, now abandoned, has become one with Nature; songs of the birds seem "within the very bricks of the masonry" (3). Set at the head of a valley in open, rolling farmland, it melds into the seasons and has been quiet for so long the very air has "assumed stillness" (4). To Jess it had a "strange wideness, as if space were spent outward without bounds" (20). Her reaction stems from her Self being walled in, permitting nothing to reach in where "self [is] sheltered" (5).

Jess, large and generally placid, is the wife of Hubert and the mother of an uncertain number of children. The conflict and



movement turn on the unremitting battle between the ignorant, unenlightened state of the couple and the spirituality and beauty of the House. Rituals of beginnings emerge strongly--naming, creating, birth--against the more relaxed rituals of preservation, telling and nurturing.

Hubert is a sharecropper with little education. He can sign his name, but it is such a painful business, he prefers to feign "illiteracy rather than to undergo the ordeal" (6). He is ambitious, though, and has a plan. He longs to get "power over some good land that he might drain the money out of it. He [is] careful, moving forward through the soil, taking from it" (6). A hideously insensitive man, he feels no ties to the soil, no love of it, no sense of preserving that "most ancient Oracle, Terra."\* Hubert is devoid of imagination and feels no responsibility for the land which nurtures him, nor for future generations. He wants "to use land as if he were the owner, and yet to be free to go to fresh acres when he [has] exhausted a tract" (5-6).

In this remorseless attack on the attitudes of many sharecroppers of her day Miss Roberts addresses a major issue. With the exception of the mining region, nearly all of rural Kentucky's abject poverty was the result of abused, ill-tended land, and the Huberts were primarily responsible. Limestone soil--most of the soil in the state--has a clay base, which means that it can be easily eroded and depleted of nutrients, or just as easily built up. Miss Roberts died about the time the agricultural agents began seeing some success in teaching the farmers how to build up the land, so she did not have the

pleasure of seeing her beloved land restored and fruitful as it is today.<sup>19</sup> It was willfully ignorant people such as Hubert, having not the courage to learn because it was an "ordeal," who wreaked havoc in the land and in the histories of such as Nellie Chesser, Ellen's worn out, listless mother in (*The Time of Man*).

Jess, as insensitive as Hubert, but who "speak[s] more frequently" and thus has "more memory," is introduced before the move to Wickwood (5):

She had been here two years, but before that time, she had lived beside a creek, and before that again in another place, while farther back the vista was run together in a fog of forgetting. She had courted Hubert in a cabin close by a roadway. She remembered another place where there was a plum tree that bore large pink-red fruits, and a place where her father had cut his foot with an ax. Now, as a marker, her own children ran a little way into a corn-field to play. Beyond these peaks in memory, going backward, the life there rested in a formless level out of which only self emerged. (5)

The self Jess sees is a body moved by passions. She identifies with both places and her children as "markers"; the number of children is never revealed and only the name of the eldest, Albert. There is no contingency between other life and hers. And even as markers, the places are narrowly limited--"a little way into the corn-field." Space in either place or time makes Jess nervous because her mind cannot project beyond the immed-

iate. Beyond the security of external boundaries, the world and time melt together in an intellectual bog.

Since naming is an intellectual and spiritual ritual, names, like places, are fundamentally utilitarian to Jess and Hubert and embody no noumenous qualities:

"Fanny Burt asked me what was the name of the sow or to name what kind of breed she was. 'Name?' I says. As if folks would name the food they eat!"

Hubert laughed at the thought of naming the food. . . . either mother or species. . . . To write with one's hand the name of a sow in a book seemed to him useless labor. Instead of giving her a name he. . . gave her all the food. . . . When she was sufficiently fat he stuck her throat with his knife and prepared her body for his own eating. (8)

This scene reduces the ignorant couple to the spiritual and intellectual level of the sow, because to name is to create. Naming is not only to order, but to call into being and to relate in an emotional sense to that being, whether it be a sow, an acre of land or another human. The act of naming, of the Word, is necessary for even the most infinitesimal spiritual growth, because it not only perceives and recognizes another creation, it also authenticates the very life of she who is naming. *The Time of Man* opens with Ellen Chesser writing her name in the air, then repeating it aloud. And in the first paragraph of *The Great Meadow*, Diony "names herself":

. Diony placed herself momentarily in life. calling mentally her name, Diony Hall. "I, Diony

Hall," her thought said, gathering herself close, subtracting herself from the diffused life of the house that closed about her. (3)

Repeating her name, she throws the yarn over her needle, "making a web," vividly imaging the interdependence between naming and creating a life pattern. "Pattern-making, as a search for meaning, begins with the simplest act of language, naming things."<sup>20</sup> In the poem, "I, Adam," Adam names the animals at the same time he is naming himself, in the simplest language of early man.

Not only does Jess not name, she does not repeat. She never "sings about the house or the dooryard," even though she has the radio turned on all the time. She mechanically repeats the rituals of feeding the chickens, doing the dishes--hence, there is no resonation between her and the ritual. Her lack of creativity severely limits her nurturing capacity, depicted in her inability to sew, because she "cannot mend any broken fabric of any kind" (9).

Her friend, Fannie Burt, "light and outflowing," makes words "seem light when she talks" (9). She tells of neighbors and their activities, of myths and legends and of the beauty of a worn tapestry, as Jess tries to "stretch her imagination to see something desired or some such thing as grace or beauty in the person who leaned over the ancient tapestry to mend it," but her imagination refuses to stretch and she becomes angry (10). Fannie also likes to entertain the children and tells them the story of a lovely place with an ogre. "a Thing," living in it

that "carries a club and eats up Life itself," a foreshadowing of Jess living in the House (10).

Jess tries to recall Fannie's tales and remember the vague images that she had evoked, but failing, rejects her, "thrusting Fannie out" (11). With no connection to the past, no "family memory," Jess cannot relate to a "sister" in the present. She sees Fannie in fragments, as a "mouth" or a "pointed face." Others reflect nothing back to her. However, Fannie proffers friendship and sisterhood to Jess, literally "fanning" her imagination. It is she who tells Jess all about Wickwood and the people who had lived there in such abundance.

Poor Jess labors to image the lovely, bright women of the Wickleys, but they go "into vague distances where doors that [are] not defined [are] opened and closed into an incomprehensible space" (13). This lyrical description of an ignorant mind reflects the external doors that Jess closes in order to shut out the outside and secure her own "space."

The Wickleys, polarities of Jess and Hubert, had been creative, nurturing people, moving the building site to save a tree, creating gardens and designing the sundial, building a bathhouse for taking showers, and so on. Bob Wickley had turned down an impressive cash offer for the creek bottom, refusing to see it plowed. Interestingly enough, he had called the man a "hog" before sending him away.

Jess, unable to grasp such a manner of living, is afraid of the House. "The House had become an entity, as including the persons and the legends of it" (18). But Hubert is boss, the move is made, and they settle into one room of an outbuilding

near the great mansion. In the grandeur and space, Jess is frightened and, having "no names" for the buildings, asks herself over and over again "what kind of place" this is (23). Having always before identified herself with a place, she now feels insecure. She certainly cannot identify herself with such a mansion:

She could not think what kind of place this might be or see any use that one might make of the great doorway, of the cord, of the bell. A strange thing stood before her. Strangeness gathered to her own being until it seemed strange that she should be here, on the top of a great stair of stone, before a great door. . . . (25)

This passage recalls the poem, "The Meeting" in a burlesque fashion. Jess does enter the door, however, and sees there a splendid suspended staircase, soaring "as a light ribbon" to the third floor. Repeating "What place is this?" she is "angry and afraid" (27). Continuing, she comes before an enormous mirror, and her reflection increases her confusion. She half screams, "Mollie Wickley! Mollie! Where's she at?" (28) Her fear then turns to anger: It was a curious beautiful fearful place. She wanted to destroy it. . . . She was angry and afraid. What she could not bring to her use she wanted to destroy (27).

In her unenlightened state she is aesthetically blind and deprived of any further growth in awareness. Her own reflection tells her nothing more than had Fannie. The only objects in the great hall that seem acceptable to her are the "dust," "cobwebs," and "grains of wheat" (27). Anything else frightens

her because her mind has no index, no reference point. She is incapable of intellectually comprehending the beauty, or of making any analogy between the soaring staircase and a soaring spirit; nor has she any notion of community with those who had lived and laughed here. She is devoid of spiritual or aesthetic attunement.

She does not return to the great house until lambing time, when Hubert installs about thirty sheep amidst the splendor. Jess helps, flinging out "sharp commands" and "anger speak[s] again and again through the room." The beauty and ritual of birth holds no meaning beyond "a delight in seeing that the necessities of lambing polluted the wide halls" (30). Jess does, however, respond to the process physically: "The ewes in labor excite her anew so that she want[s] to be using her strength and to be moving" (31).

When Hubert leaves to get more straw, and Jess is alone with the sheep, an apparition appears, "the Thing. . . drifting forward out of the gloom" (31). Her fear, aroused by Fannie's tale of the ogre, is stronger than any other thought, and she does not recognize her own reflection. Keeping an eye on the "Thing," she works with the sheep, but the creature seems to be following her. As she goes to check the sheep near the other end of the hall, it moves forward, becoming "a threatening figure, a being holding a light and a club in its hands" (32). She rushes at the figure, screaming curses, but it comes on:

As she hurled forward with uplifted stick the other came forward toward her, lunging and threatening.

. . . The creature's mouth was open to cry words but no sound came from it. She dropped the lantern and flung herself upon the approaching figure, and she beat at the creature with her club while it beat at her with identical blows. Herself and the creature then were one. Anger continued, shared, and hurled against a crash of falling glass and plaster. She and the creature had beaten at the mirror from opposite sides. (33)

This scene, both chilling and amusing, is a "meeting" of sorts between the consciousness and the soul of an unenlightened being, an aborted meeting, obviously, since Jess does not in any way recognize herself. The only thing reflected back to her is the image of her own fear. Her own reflection has no meaning, thus she has no Self because she has no consciousness with which to recognize the Self. She will never say "I, Jess," and will never separate herself from the outer world. She cannot, then, create and recreate herself, but can only destroy. She becomes one with the creature in destruction, not in creation, and symbolically destroys the only self she has. One might interpret the "creature" as the consciousness trying to get out from behind "undefined doors" but, its not having any useful purpose, Jess would have destroyed it anyway. She is herself a Haunted Palace.\*

After the lambing is finished and Hubert returns, they count the sheep--struggling with the numbers. Finally concluding that they have fifty-nine lambs, they are pleased. Jess is now at ease:



It was near midnight. Jess felt accustomed to the place now and more at ease there, she and Hubert being in possession of it. They walked about through the monstrous defilement. (34)

The only things of value to an unawakened consciousness are those that can be counted and possessed. Professors Campbell and Foster tentatively posit a different interpretation to the end of the story; that is, that Jess has perhaps destroyed her own evil, and that the quietly nursing lambs indicate that she has made peace with what she feared.<sup>41</sup> But Jess is ignorant, not evil; Miss Roberts herself states that Jess is "destructive ignorance."<sup>42</sup>

With ineffable skill, and without "gimmicks," Miss Roberts exposes an ignorant mind whose superstitions and fear lead to destruction. It was this sort of story that was often compared to Faulkner's work, and one could compare her skill in entering Jess' mind to the exposition of Benjy's mind in *The Sound and the Fury*. J. Donald Adams, in writing about *My Heart and My Flesh*, claims that novel to be the only thing "America has produced. . . . approaching Dostoevsky in psychological intensity." He also concludes that "it reduces Faulkner to melodramatic claptrap." That statement may itself be a mite melodramatic, but Adams does make a valid point. Just as she avoids gothic textures, Miss Roberts avoids melodrama, and Faulkner avoids neither. Her movement into and out of the recesses of a mind is so swift and so light, there is seldom a feeling of sleight-of-hand or contrivance.

The difference between the two authors probably arises from what each is seeking. Faulkner, for example, seems to be circling about, searching for some great truth *beyond* the fact of the individual; Miss Roberts is always searching for truth *in* the fact of the individual, never beyond.

Young Moss Beavers in "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" exemplifies her search. Moss has been slipping around, buying cigarettes and smoking, copying the older boys, when he hears that there is to be a trial. It is illegal to sell cigarettes and liquor to minors, and the men who have been doing so are to be tried. Moss, feeling horribly guilty, is certain that he is going to be put into jail. To make matters worse, he has also just been informed that he has won the prize for the Sunday School Contest for being "diligent, punctual, and devout" (123). The prize is to be awarded the next Sunday at church by Uncle Bob Seaton, also the Foreman of the Grand Jury. Poor Moss does not know if he is saint or sinner. He is certain that everyone will learn of his sin and that, instead of awarding him the prize, Bob Seaton will denounce him publicly.

At the end, Moss learns that the children are not being arrested, that only the adults who knew they were breaking the law would be punished. The story ends with Uncle Bob Seaton reaching down to give Moss a handup into his wagon. This simple tale deals not at all with the crime, but with Moss' guilt, and rejects totally the notion of Original Sin. Moss did not sin, and he was not a sinner, but just a boy growing up with potential for good and not-so-good. His truth was in himself, not in the community or some eternal law. And though the story does

not have a feminine consciousness at its center, it reminds that "sin" implies choice, not guilt.

Both the repulsive and attractive aspects of "sin" in that period when childhood is fringing on adulthood are limned in one especially well-wrought passage:

There was a sweet secrecy in the dim little dirty brown shop. Moss lingered, unwilling to leave. Here he had no need to be careful either of his speech or of his manner. Wills dropped, now and then, an obscene word as he struggled with the trap. Moss was thinking that he would go buy a package of the cigarettes presently and go home to his cow and to his supper. A low call came from the rear door of the shop and Wills were to answer it. "To let you know I'm back from the city," a woman's voice said.

There was a low dialogue outside. A path led from the rear door, down through the weeds of the small pasture and over the creek on stepping stones. It went off among cabins and shacks to the hill where the dice-throwers went to win the earnings of hard-working black men. Moss knew of these things, but they had seemed the simple matters of every day. Now as he watched Wills. . . he knew these things more completely. (109)

It must have been down the road "a piece" from Moss that the story of Patty and Sabina was set, in the Knob country. "Holy Morning" is Miss Roberts purest and simplest invocation of sisterhood--the balance between individuation and merging in

mutual support and love--and the power that humans have, working together in love, to create and affirm life.

Sabina and Patty, sisters twenty-four and sixteen, live with their Uncle Tim. It is Christmas Eve, and Sabina has recently returned from the city where she had gone to work in an "eat-place" (143). She is happy to be home where "no sharp voices" speak and where the daily rituals she and Patty perform are too "light and pleasant to afflict them as labor" (149). It had not been so in the city:

"Strange people. . . hurried and dissatisfied. Coffee poured out of a spout. . . . And do the same thing every day, over and over. They come in and they go out. . . . talk about what they care little. . . ."  
(143)

It had not been an easy choice for Sabina to return homewithout her "fortune." But Sabina was only doing what most of Kentucky's youth still do and as Miss Roberts herself did when she returned home from Chicago. She went back with a rush that "carried [her] deep and deep."\* Perhaps it is what Miss Roberts calls "personality" and "design"; but it seems to be more "what is treasured within, what is identical with the breath of life," that sense of validity and selfhood that extends far beyond the individual in time and space, often misunderstood by outlanders. Miss Roberts must have been horrified at the criticism of her heroes as "lowly, illiterate, bucolic. . . portrayed with an art which seems to us far too good for the subjects."<sup>22</sup> Not only did that reviewer misunderstand the land and its people, he misunderstood "what she was about."

Sabina, though not illiterate or "lowly," has all the same rejected the "sharp voices" and the empty rituals to return home, and is surprised to find that she feels no different than when she left--". . . here I am, the same" (145). Her return has provoked a curiosity in both girls "to try to discover differences in their ways of being," because, except for Sabina's being "more firm and hearty, there [is] scarcely a trace of difference between" them (142-44):

She caught the mirror in her hand and looked from her image to her sister's face, forth and back, in a slight flutter of distress and delight.

". . . And your mouth dents in at the corners, and mine dents too in the same fashion."

They passed the glass back and forth between them.

". . . My eyes are the color of a little puddle of water in the pasture. . . ."

"Sabina, what a way to say it! My eyes are that kind, but mine have got a little bloodshot place in one corner where I cried last night because it began to snow. . . ." (142-44)

Their search echoes many of the poems and reinforces the idea that all humans are essentially the same in body, mind and passions and must deliberately "subtract" themselves from the life about them. Patty and Sabina are both on the edge of individuation and the discovery of the Self. That Patty is eight years younger reflects the cyclic pattern of Nature itself. Patty has discovered one tiny difference, the "little

bloodshot place" caused by the experience, the emotion, of sadness. The discussion continues as Sabina remarks:

"It's a curious thing how one that's younger catches up with the older one. The more we seem to be just alike the more I try to go inside myself and find a difference. I'm not Patty inside myself because I can remember a longer piece back and can recall more."

(145)

The implication here that differences are within, that the Self is located within, is nicely enforced by the Proustian index of memory. Nature's cycles create a decalage in time, but even that is not worthy of note: "But even that won't make us very different, or any different whatever" (145). However, what does make a difference is what the mirror has to say, what it reflects back to the individual:

"Oh, the mirror is talken to me! . . . Words say what I see in the glass. Did you hear, Sabina? Did you say or did the glass say? Take it away. I am afeared of a glass that can talk." (147)

Thus, the "noise" in the mirror commences, the reflections of experiences that will set off change and create the differences that she seeks. Patty catches a glimpse of the inner-outer collision where "mind rushes out to the very edge of sense--then mind turns about and sees itself mirrored within itself."\* And she is "afeared," but does not destroy the "mirror-mind" as Jess did.

Part of their likeness lies in ritual and the tendency inherent in ritual to create unthinking sameness:

" . . . your hand goes into the corn pan, and then mine goes, and I take out an ear, and then you, kind for kind, alike. Or I think a thought and you think the same. . . ." (149)

They both remark that if Hallie May, kept away by the snow, had been able to come they would not seem so much alike, since their daily activities would have been different, their rituals changed. And, Hallie would have supplied an additional reflection. The two girls reflect each other in rituals, yet rituals provide the opportunity for change at the same time that they themselves change. Moreover, the change in rituals is set off by the very experience they set up

The girls continue their work as they talk of Luke Shaw, "strong," "kind-hearted," "curly-headed," and bashful. Sabina attributes his bashfulness to his curly hair, but Patty announces that he is only bashful around Sabina, who admits at last that Luke Shaw was her reason for returning. "Nobody I saw where I went was so hearty with life or so ready in fun" (157). And love, the motivating force, is revealed to be the difference between the two as Sabina says, "But I've got Luke Shaw in my own self and there I'm myself and not any other" (167).

A jarring note is introduced into this pastoral scene when Sabina goes to tend the animals. Neighbors' hounds are loose, "howling and running as if they ran a great course across the world" (162):

"It's a strange world where such in the way things

"The rabbits kill the birds and the geese, and the hounds kill the foxes."

"Then people, they kill all kinds. . . ."

"But mankind is the only one that wars and kills his own kind. . . ."

"Drives his own sort away and uses his own. . . ."

"Mankind does. The mankind is the only kind that so uses his own. . . ."

"Why, then, would a beast kneel down to his religion if that's the way mankind uses?"

Sabina could not answer. . . . (167-68)

The hounds evoke the atmosphere and theme of the poem, "Fox Hunt," but there is not the sense here of a searching for identity but of chaos. The war and fear and confusion of the whole process wakes Sabina in the night:

In her thought swift hounds were running down the world. They were begging for pity. They were wanting the sheep and the foxes that ran ahead of them through the clods and dust of a torn field. The mouths of the hounds were open to cry their wrongs, to whimper for pity and anger at the fox that would not be caught. War roared across the world. Men in thousands were made to run from land to land, and no place was left for them to be. . . and fear ran swiftly on the track of courage to devour courage in its frenzied jaw (169).

The war motif at first seems intrusive but, in recalling the outside world that Sabina has visited, it emphasizes both



the fact that she had a "place" to go home to and the fact that she, in her own being, is courageous and unafraid. The handing down of the way of the world, of man's using his own kind, from Sabina to Patty is important, because the teaching flavor of the handing-down process here accentuates the nurturing character of the sisters' relationship and carries that nurturing beyond the immediacy of the physical to the intellectual and the future.

The next morning the two girls find a ewe injured by the hounds in front of the house. Patty, at first thinking it human, is quite shaken. Its "humanity" is continued by its cries "like a child in terrible pain" (172). Then the young ewe suddenly gives birth to a tiny lamb and stiffens her limbs, preparing to die. At that moment there is a knock at the door and Luke Shaw appears. Sabina, already upset by the suffering of the injured ewe, is moved by the sight of Luke and begins to tremble: "She caught her breath in deep panting sobs, like those of the bearing sheep" (174). This scene contrasts sharply with that of Jess being "excited" by the lambing sheep. A strong emotion is evoked in both women, in one case brute sexuality and in the other love and compassion. This illustrates perhaps the two mysteries of Uncle Tim: The way of animals is the instinctive raging of hounds, the responding to brute passion with brute passion; but the mystery of man manifests his compassion and love, because he is able to see his reflection and can will to control his instincts.

With Luke giving directions, the three work over the ewe until she "is on the way back to life." Sabina, looking at "the mirror of Patty," sees "herself as she looked kneeling beside

the faint ewe": "Herself in Patty laid a gentle hand on the ewe's thigh. . . . Her hand, Patty's hand, swayed over the lamb. . . ." (176). So alike in looks, temperament and compassion, the girls need the experience of love, of life, to make the difference between them. There is also the sense here of Luke calling Sabina into being:

Shaw looked past the mirror of Patty and looked straight toward herself. "I saw a light. . . . Christmas time and a man goes where he most wants to be. . . . 'Sabina,' I said, 'is not asleep. I'll go . . . to be where Sabina is'." (177)

The symbolism is most evident, but a religious note is not to be assumed. The light that Luke has seen is an electric bulb or the light of a fireplace, a light built by humans. No mystery is evinced. Miss Roberts is saying that mankind in his instinctive passions has nearly killed the Christ spirit, the concept of universal fraternity, but despite the bestial nature in some, there are those whose nobility lights a light and restores life.

After a close reading of any one of Miss Roberts' works, one is struck by the nature of her images, symbols and names which, though cast with such clarity, refuse to crystallize and stay put. They "mirror," of course, the open-ended character of human experience and growth, but for the reader they raise the same problem as do the works of Blake, Rimbaud, Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Proust, Woolf and others like them; that is, there is such an imbricate texture to each image, name, or symbol, one can peel back layers seemingly *ad infinitum*. This same quality

is also apparent in titles. (She wrote of her struggle to find the precise title for *My Heart and My Flesh*.) The title of *Not by Strange Gods* is no exception, and it should not be taken for granted that Biblical implications are intended.

Miss Roberts shared a good many points of view with T. S. Eliot as far as traditional and aesthetic standards and values in art, and art's relation to the social, cultural and spiritual issues of the day. Both were visionaries and accepted the sense of mystery that is poetry, yet both were unremittingly realistic and wholly unrhetorical. Indeed, if Miss Roberts' writing had fitted better with all the rhetoric that was spewing forth from American pens during the twenties and the thirties, it would be taught today on more university campuses. Unfortunately, "no one else was doing that kind of writing." But Stephen Spender said something in his excellent book on Eliot that is as apt when applied to Miss Roberts:

It is his complete intellectual grasp of his situation in the history of his time and in relation to the past, combined with the fact that intellect and poetic imagination, poetry and criticism, though capable of the utmost cooperation, were separate spheres of mental activity, which made him the poet who best understood the problems of writing poetry in English at the beginning of this century...and of solving those problems in his own way in a unique body of poetry.<sup>24</sup>

Those who criticize her for her "regionalism" and failure to deal with social and economic problems would certainly disagree that that statement describes her in any way. However, as

already pointed out, she was not living with her head in the sand; it is merely that for her poetics took precedence over polemics. Both poets would have felt that to write only for the "message" would have been a betrayal of art. Miss Roberts made her thoughts on the subject very clear:

[Poetry] is a high synthesis of aspirations, of social aspirations, group or human longings, brought to clear statement in terms of beauty. . . .\*

There is finally and at first, last and first, the aesthetic requirement. . . . Beyond theses and plot, beyond history and the daily real, is a thematic design. . . . Shall we call it the "categorical aesthetic"?\*

Keeping to some universal integrity, some set of cosmic aesthetic values, keeping to the writing of "great Homeric themes of blood and waste and death. . . . Of life," defined her own values and shaped her own writing, as one could also say of Eliot.\*

There is a point, however, at which a great rift appears between the two poets--the spiritual status of the contemporary world and contemporary man. Miss Roberts did not consider her world a "wasteland," a refutation of past traditions, nor her semblables "hollow," or Prufocks or Kurtzes. For her, the key to both collective and personal redemption lies within the individual and his regeneration of rituals and integration of the past--"All deities reside in the human breast"--not in society and its institutions and "coffee-spoon" rituals.~\* This

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A CLEAR DESIGN: THE NOVELS

Miss Roberts writes of Henry James that he "is excellent material as offering points of departure for those delvings into meanings and half meanings which we like to make in an effort to *enlarge the capacity for experience and to revalue the human race*" (italics added).<sup>\*</sup> Though she is referring to James' narrative style, the remark is revelatory of her own purpose, and particularly cogent in the comprehensive sweep of her longer works, in which Woman "revalues the human race." In the five major novels female heroes are identified not only with goddesses, such as Dione, Aphrodite and Juno, but also replace many male mythical and patriarchal heroes: The story of one is an Odyssey--though written as the story of Adam--and others become Prometheus, Joseph the Patriarch, Job and, by implication, Christ. All become "Creator," what one might call the "God-Source." Even in the two minor novels not centered in a single female consciousness, women wield the controlling power: In the final scene of *Jingling in the Wind*, Jeremy demands of Tulip, "I want to know. . . , whether I rescued a maiden from a dragon or subdued an Amazon." But, obeying the spider's counsel, "never tell him," Tulip does not answer, because she is also a creator of culture and has drawn Jeremy into her own web (249); and the woman Philly Blair is the primary focus of *A Buried Treasure* (1931).

divergence in how they saw the world "peels back" another layer of the title, *Not by Strange Gods*.

In 1934 Eliot published a collection of lectures, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*, in which he took some of his peers to task--Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce in particular--in light of Christian orthodoxy. He even went so far as to say that Lawrence was "spiritually sick."<sup>20</sup> Later, regretting the publication, he withdrew it. Since the lectures were delivered at the University of Virginia, Miss Roberts undoubtedly read them. Of course, whatever audience they were addressed to, she would have read them, because two of her favorite authors were Hardy and Lawrence, two other writers of "realism" concerned with the motivating force behind human behavior. And it is highly possible that *Not by Strange Gods* was written in response to Eliot's criticism. That would explain the placement of "The Haunted Palace" as the first story in the collection because, at one point, speaking of the tendency of "realistic" writers to emphasize the emotional aspect of their characters' makeup rather than their attempt to follow some sort of moral code or attain some nobility of character, Eliot writes:

It is by no means self-evident that human beings are most real when violently excited: violent physical passions do not in themselves differentiate men from each other, but rather tend to reduce them to the same state."<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, and in some cases their violent passions can reduce them to the state of "Things" or bloodthirsty hounds. Yet, Miss

Roberts would never accept anything external to the Self as a remedy. She would never have written "Lord, I am not worthy/ Lord, I am not worthy/ but speak the word only."<sup>22</sup> Once when Virginia Woolf asked Eliot what his feelings were when he prayed, he replied that he attempted to concentrate, to forget self, to attain union with God.<sup>23</sup> The question, then, turns on where one finds God.

For Miss Roberts, as for Berkeley, God is a spirit who is "present and conscious to our innermost thoughts," the "Author of Nature" who "is far more readily perceived than the existence of men." Furthermore, there is only one great spirit that authors all of Nature--even violent passions--"one, eternal, infinitely wise, and perfect spirit [who] 'works in all'...who is ultimately present to our minds, producing in them all that variety of ideas or sensations which continually affect us."<sup>24</sup> There is no room here for Manichaeism, no dualism. All comes from what she calls the "Source" in *My Heart and My Flesh* (152), and since all "ideas" and "sensations" are produced by God in the mind, sin and evil do not really exist. Then what causes man to war on his own kind? Again, Berkeley gives the answer:

If we consider the difference there is betwixt natural philosophers and other men with regard to their knowledge of the phenomena, we shall find it consists not in an exact knowledge of the efficient cause that produces them--for that can be no greater than the will of a spirit--but only in a greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and

agreements are discovered. . . and sought after by the mind.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, Jess is not evil; she is simply in need of a "greater largeness of comprehension." She is unable to abstract or make analogies, because those "undefined doors" in her mind have not as yet opened. The reason she can count is that "mathematics" come from the senses, from the ability to see, feel, hear more than one of a kind.<sup>32</sup> Berkeley had great influence on many: Diderot, Condillac, Kant, Hume, Bergson, and most especially Rousseau and Jung, both of whom often repeat Berkeley word for word. And, both of whom seem to have influenced Miss Roberts. Rousseau agreed that men are "*plutôt farouches que méchants*" (savage rather than evil) and that intellectual and spiritual qualities in mankind evolve at the same pace as knowledge and "*la parole*" (the word).<sup>33</sup> Intrinsically, man has "*la perfectibilité*," the facility to perfect himself, and it is that philosophy which underlies the organization, the development and the entire "message" of *Not by Strange Gods*. It is a direct refutation of Eliot's view of humanity.

Jess and Hubert symbolize Rousseau's Troglodytes, the unawakened consciousness of early man, from which contemporary man certainly descended. Jess' destructive acts are directed by her "unconscious tendencies that, just in so far as they are deprived of their energy by a *lack of conscious recognition*, they assume a correspondingly destructive character."<sup>34</sup> Her lack of conscious recognition and her inability to imagine place Jess at the dawn of language and self-direction. Nevertheless,



she is the mother archetype, emblemed in her name, most certainly from Isaiah 11:1--"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots"--which designates her the head of the lineage of Christ. Her gender, besides demonstrating that all females, even the unevolved, spin culture, is not genealogically inaccurate, because it is through Mary that Christ is linked to the "House of David." The name of Hubert, on the other hand, undoubtedly comes from *hubris*.

The word "haunted" appears often in Miss Roberts' works and is extremely important in the context of this collection. The experience of the "Self-Haunted Girl" alerts us that "the mind requires its fulfillment."\* The "hound of identity" will not permit the mind to remain in an unenlightened state. An archetypal urge to evolution energizes the human psyche, a point of view shared by many from Paracelsus to Jung. That is why Fannie Burt "fans" Jess' imagination. Also implied is the title of the earlier collection, *The Haunted Mirror* which, according to its author, is "the human mind, in the illusions of which is seen a reflection of reality."\* Jess destroys the "mirror-mind" out of ignorance, but the lineage is established and will continue, as will the search for identity in a collective as well as an individual context.

Placed second in the collection is "I Love My Bonny Bride," the story of Aunt Patty and Lena, even more interesting viewed from the perspective that the "time of man" has its genesis in a woman. Patty, descended from "patrician" nobility, is again the embodiment of the female archetype who creates culture, the

image of the male being contained *within* the spider. In *Jingling in the Wind*, the origin of culture is within the spinning spider: "I have it all here, the whole of culture. I draw it all out of myself with my long supple fingers, I pattern it on the air" (230). Jeremy, the protagonist, then announces that he is going to "found a Masculine Renaissance," in which women will be once more submissive, to which the spider immediately responds that she "will not be weaving tomorrow," that she expects "to eat her husband" instead. After eating him "down to the last mouthful," she will "begin a new race of spiders, each as complex as [her]self" (236). Patty is also of this new race, and she is going to pattern culture not on superstition and fear, reminiscent of the voices and social dicta, but on self-determination and liberation.

Lena, whose name, Evalena, denotes "little Eve," is even more evolved than her aunt. She is quite centered in her Self and advanced in the use of the Word. Lena, "remembering herself," gives voice to the evolutionary, individuating urge within that must prevail over the "voices of the house." That urge is beautifully expressed in the prologue to *My Heart and My Flesh*:

It is the will to say, the power never being sufficient, the reach toward the last word--less than word, half-word, quarter-word, minimum of a word--that shrinks more inwardly and farthest toward its center when it is supplicated, that cries back, "Come," or "Here, I am," when it is unsought. It is the act of

looking when the mirror of the earth looks back into a creature. . . ." (27).

Lena can exercise that will because of her ability to use the Word, formed by the mind, and her memory, held in the mind. Therefore, armed with the example of Patty, she will be able to influence not only her own life in the future, but the lives of others as well.

In 1916, C. G. Jung, considering all the recent study into the origin and power of language, made this statement:

Directed thinking or. . . , *thinking in words* is manifestly an instrument of culture. . . the tremendous work of education which past centuries have devoted to directed thinking, thereby forcing it to develop from the subjective, individual sphere to the objective, social sphere, has produced a readjustment to the human mind. . . . <sup>34</sup>

Lena exhibits "directed thinking" and can look into "the mirror of the earth" without panic. She is thus balanced between the inner and the outer, which balance is held within, as the story of Moss Beavers portrays.

In "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," Moss, a combination of both plant and animal life, holds both "good" and "evil" within him, signifying that neither can exist without the other. Both "moss" and "beaver" bearing aquatic significance--archetype for the unconscious--suggests that this is simply a more evolved form of Jess' battle between conscious and unconscious urges. The name of "Wills," given to the criminal, supplies the means

for balance. Wills has evidently "willed" to do evil, whereas Moss still has a choice.

The theme of choice continues into the next story, "Holy Morning." Patty and Sabina, whose names betoken the persistence of nobility re-emerging in lineage, are the nieces of Uncle Tim Wheelright--probably both the inventor of the wheel and one who "wheels" in the right direction. Sabina has been out into the world, but it has not changed her. She is still Sabina, a word designating "rock cedar," as well as Sabine nobility, has made the choice to return and is "warm in her own being," unafraid of chaos or of the conflict between spirit and instinct. However, chaos appears at her own doorstep. She cannot escape experience out of which she will grow, and her passionate response to the injured ewe is most meaningful, since passion, or emotion, is undifferentiated, neither good nor bad. Sabina, in her passion, is responding to instinct just as the hounds are, just as Jess and Moss and the "voices" are. Passion can give birth to either destruction or new life, depending on the being's state of consciousness. As Rousseau says, it is "by their [passions] activity that our intellect is perfected."<sup>15</sup> Jung agrees that "emotion is the alchemical fire whose warmth brings everything into existence."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, he states that "instinct is not in itself bad any more than spirit is good...evaluation depends entirely on the . . . state of the conscious mind."<sup>17</sup> He maintains that opposing energies are necessary as does Berkeley:

The mixture of pain and uneasiness which is in the world. . . is indispensably necessary to our well-

being. . . those particular things which, considered in themselves, appear to be evil, have the nature of good, when considered as linked with the whole system of beings.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, all of them would proclaim with Miss Roberts and Blake that "Without Contraries is no progression."<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, without the hounds the sheep would not have been injured, the lights would not have been on, and a new love would not have been born along with a new life. Luke, the "physician," also prompted by emotion, arrives in time to save life. This contrasts interestingly with Eliot's "Journey of the Magi," in which the speaker states that he "should be glad of another death."<sup>41</sup>

"The Betrothed" is an evolution of the conscious mind choosing between blind instinct and the will of the spirit, but the psychology of the story is much more complex. The instinctive world of the Troglodytes has not changed much, for example, in the "way life begins" or in the portrayal of Vic's marriage. She and Joe relate to each other out of instinct, and all Vic can say about why they stay together is "I don't know." Rhody, whose name is of great import, is at a point somewhere between Vic and the twins. "Rhod-," meaning "red," is the prefix of many mineral and vegetable families and classes. In one way, then, the name refers to the blood in the vats, the red ribbon Vic ties on her hair, and the three small spots on the quilt. All of these may be linked with the blood of life and/or lineage.

Rhody's two young sisters are Lilly and Ruby, one a beautiful species of mineral life, the other of plant life, signifying "preciousness" and "purity." Other intents are possible, however: The ruby is red and is "dead" plant life; the lily generally symbolizes the resurrection. It is this last interpretation that seems most pertinent to the three stains on the quilt, because "rhod-" is followed by a "y" only in the case of "rhodymeniaceae," a family of red algae--red plus "hymen"--that grows in many forms and variations. It is an all-alike-yet-different theme recalling Patty and Sabina, as well as "a race of spiders." Women are alike physiologically, but complex and in possession of a unique Self out of which each must pattern her own "culture." Moreover, if making love is the "little death," as the French say, then each dies and is resurrected many times, which would further explain the symbolism of "Lilly" and "Ruby," the twins.

It would also emphasize the "created, forever recreated" spiral that racial (human race) life is for Miss Roberts. Perry Lancer's story further reinforces the theme of ongoing rebirth. Peregrine is a "wanderer," a "pilgrim" and a "sojourner" in the land. She lives in harmony with the cycles of the seasons, with life and death, singing between the new potatoes and the litanies. Her instincts are healthy, her will strong, and her consciousness quite discerning. And despite "contraries," she "lances" herself into life with faith and joy. Perry is like Blake's "busy little bee," who "has no time for sorrow."<sup>11</sup> She is also a Sisyphus figure, as all heroes must be, including the Frontier Woman

The affirmation of faith in the human impulse to transcend, the will to evolve, ensuring the "onward-goingness of the race," inherent in the feminine consciousness, clearly dictates the layout of the book, echoing the poems and the earlier collection. And the primary energy for that thrust is located inward, toward what professor McDowell calls "the sovereign self."<sup>44</sup> Because of the "mirrors" of Nature and of others, because of daily and seasonal rituals, because of the "one eternal spirit who works in all," the hero can turn inward and there, finding God, find redemption, "not by strange gods," but by her Self.

Lewis P. Simpson observes that Miss Roberts' heroes "take on classical mythical proportions" and denotes the image of the spinning spider of culture as "God symbolized as feminine mind." Indeed, "feminine renaissance" seems to soar like an aria above all the major themes and conflicts of the five novels centered in the consciousnesses of five women: Ellen Chesser, Theodosia Bell, Diony Hall, Dena James and Jocelle Drake. All except Dena James in *Black Is My Truelove's Hair* experience "death" and rebirth which frees them, not from history nor social institutions, but to integrate the past and become creators of both the present and the future. Dena, though her story makes an important statement of women's rights and status in the social structure, does not embody the archetype of the goddess as do the other four women, thus will not be a part of the design here.

The other four stories unfold on Miss Roberts' major themes: Duality inherent in human nature reconciled and integrated into a center of consciousness held within a single mind; violence, sins, and inertia of the past transmuted into creative energy, imposing order on chaos; interconnectedness of collective and individual experience, consciousness and spirit; compulsive sexuality transformed into controlled, nurturing, expanding love; development of the will as a spiritual energy that cuts cleanly through the physical inertia of crystallized rituals and institutions. And threading through and around all else are the promise of constant renewal and the power of the Word which permit "common [wo]men to do an uncommon thing" (*Raven* 253).



Themes, myths, motifs, and images are doubled and redoubled, woven and rewoven. In 1939, journalist Rena Niles gave her interview with Miss Roberts the apt title "She Writes the Way She Weaves." And indeed, the texture of Miss Roberts work is reminiscent of a rich fabric, the most important element of that fabric being the design. And though each of her heroes creates her own pattern, the overall design is that of Woman growing in a mounting spiral of coming-to-being, after her awakening in the consciousness of young Ellen Chesser.

#### *The Time of Man*(1926)

"Life began somewhere on the roads" for Ellen, only surviving child of seven born to Henry and Nellie Chesser, itinerant farmers. And when her story ends, she is once more "on the roads." From the time of her appearance at age fourteen--as she writes her name in the air--to the time she takes her departure some twenty years later, the conspicuous events of her life parallel those of the lives of most poor, unlettered women of her time: She lives in three different ramshackle tenant houses with her parents; makes friends but loses them because of distances and the impasses of muddy roads, hills and "hollers"; falls in love with Jonas Prather, a fickle man who jilts her; suffers the trauma of finding a neighbor, Miss Cassie, just after she has hanged herself over a philandering husband; falls in love with Jasper Kent, only to

see him accused of barn burning; marries Jasper and lives the life of a sharecropper's wife; has five children, the fourth of which, born sickly during her depression over Jasper's infidelity, dies in infancy; has another child; heroically rescues Jasper from hooded men who come to beat him when he is again accused of barn burning; is once more forced to take to the roads.

Ellen's *visible life* is, then, one of pain, drudgery and unrealized dreams, hardly an exciting or noteworthy one. And, interwoven as it is with the daily rituals of feeding turkeys and pigs, hoeing hard ground and digging rocks, sewing and cooking, it hardly seems worth chronicling. Ellen and her family, having grown out of the earlier story of Sallie May, "are less than an essence out of the soil. They are a word out of the clods," and, as such, they represent a significant number of Kentucky families in the early part of this century.\* Of much greater import in the metaphor of Ellen as the "word out of the clods," however, is the implication that she is a new creation, a new Adam with "claim upon all the land and no claim" (381). Ellen is a new creation in a New World and, damaged though it is, that world is still the cradle of the myth.

The Chessers came from Central Kentucky (as did their creator), one of the state's most beautiful regions, but also one that had suffered most from overuse and ignorance of farming methods, primarily because of its natural boundaries which prevented mobility. Jimmat Clark, who has spent all of his ninety-plus years in Green County, recalls: "They'd clear a patch of ground, fence it, wear it out, and clear another."~

And James Smith, Taylor County dairyman, claims that "by 1940 the land was plumb wore out."<sup>3</sup> By 1900, the "wore out" land was wearing out those who worked it, especially the itinerant and tenant farmers who had taken the place of slaves after the Civil War. Henry, then, is weather-beaten and "stringy"; and Nellie is snaggle-toothed and listless from having seven children in twelve years of insufficient nutrition and has given up, "her broken hair hanging in oily strings around her forehead" (27). Not having her daughter's strength and imagination, she is incapable of seeing beyond the immediate chore or disaster; life becomes to her no more than a "strange long curious thing without alternative" (381).

The difference between the two women reveals itself in the first two paragraphs of the book: Nellie is huddled under a shawl in the broken-down wagon, complaining "we ought to be a-goen on," while Ellen dreams of "a wagon as would never break down" if she had "all the money in the world" (9). Through Nellie, her dreams as broken as the wagon, the invalidation and weariness of the lives of such women are announced. Nellie is what *is*; Ellen, on the other hand, filled with the dreams of youth, is hope and change in the midst of abject poverty.

Ellen is painfully aware of the poverty and bleakness of her life and longs for "things to put in drawers and drawers to put things in," when Henry moves them into a tenant shack on Hep Bodine's farm (47). Yet, despite her economic circumstances, she evinces a strong sense of her own identity from the first sentence of her story. And though "she suffer[s] great shame" when "fat ladies with pink plump daughters" pass and see her in

her "skimp dress"; and though aware of a difference between landowners and her "kind of people," she is angry when Mrs. Bodine makes her feel poor, "the look of the woman and the voice of the woman shoving at her clothing, her clothing shoving at her skin and making her bones articulate stiffly." She decides that Mrs. Bodine is no better than she is: "I got no lice. She lied that-there woman. I got no more lice'n she's got." And after the "gazers" pass, she is "her former self again" (37-40).

Ellen's creator evidently shared in her strong sense of identity, seeing her as an epic hero:

It was, I think, in the summer of 1919 that I began to think of the wandering tenant farmer of our region as offering a symbol for an Odyssey [sic] of man as a wanderer, buffeted about by the fates and the weathers.\*

Adding to the sense of aristocracy implicit in an "Odyssey," Miss Roberts bestows on the Chessers the names of great royalty --Henry and Helen, of which both Nellie and Ellen are derivatives. The name Chesser is also provocative. Henry says that it was "by rights Cheshire away back," the name of the county in Northern England that boasts a Roman city, a Norman castle, and lovely old half-timbered Tudor houses (177). William the Conqueror's first son was, of course, Henry I, and the ancient game of chess is a game dealing with the destinies of kings and queens. "Chess" is also a weedy grass, native to Europe and considered by some to be a degenerate wheat.

The Chessers can, then, be said to be the descendants of ancient kings and queens who, victims of the "fates and the

weathers," have become "degenerate" royalty. Furthermore, Jasper Kent, the name of Ellen's husband, links Kent County, England to the state of Kentucky. Many Kentuckians, like most Southerners, trace their heritage back to Great Britain and, often enough, to noble and royal families. Miss Roberts, herself quite conscious of her own Celtic ancestry, was described by Glenway Wescott as "blue-blooded," from "another of those lands of antique gentry brought low."<sup>4</sup>

She seems to have imparted some sense of her "blue-bloodedness" to all of her heroes. A problem arises, however, in Ellen's case because she has no sense of truly belonging either in the past or the present. The girl is gifted with a profound sense of "amness," but it is of *who she is in name and as a separate consciousness*--"I'm Ellen Chesser" (73). She senses neither meaning, nor connection to others, nor her own *self-in-the-world*. Indeed, life itself holds no definitive meaning to the adolescent Ellen; it "goes on and on," and "what is it all for anyway?" she wonders (96-7). Presented at the end of that era when people were still identified by and locked into the specific group or class to which they belonged, women more so than men, Ellen is shut into a stultifying world without exits, forays from the outside world or role models. This lack of exposure to and incursion from the outside world produced not only inbred families and ignorance--Henry's recollection of being told that the sun was made of fish oil--but also a stagnation of selfness and self-consciousness, the malady from which Nellie suffers. And Ellen, despite her consciousness of self and her discomfiture at being made to feel different,

searches constantly for "our kind of people" with whom to identify (34).

It is the eternal conflict between the state of individuation and the state of unity, the search for some personal sense of meaning and of a connection to others, that sets the pattern of development in the young Ellen. Her story is about the *value and meaning* of an individual interacting with a community which is ignorant of that value and meaning, as the communities of Quasimodo or Tess "Darbyville" or Julien Sorel were ignorant of theirs. Ellen is the disenfranchised, the "voice of the soil," and her odyssey is to find and believe in her own value as a vital link in that chain of "onward-going beings." She must, in other words, discover and "create" her Self by herself; her community gives her nothing. It is a reality she poignantly acknowledges after shouting her name into the wind: "Here I am! . . . I'm Ellen Chesser. . . . You didn't hear e'er a thing. . . . Did you think you heard something a-callen?" (89) Miss Roberts acknowledges the bare essence of Ellen's existence in her journal, writing that the story was "founded upon additions":

The intention was to begin with the least that one could handle, scarcely more than the breath of life in the throat, and slowly to add minute particle after minute particle until a being with life experience should be built together.\*

Ellen's first "life experience" after her appearance, the broken down wagon, is a wrenching one because it separates her from her friend Tessie--shiny Tessie of the shiny hair who owns

four books and who once took Ellen inside the cathedral at Nashville. Tessie West, a member of the "road rats," is a young woman who can read and dream of "a brick house with a gallery. . . a house by a seaside. . . a-setten out the pretties. . . a-comen down marble stairs," and who can sing a song about "Fair Elender" (30-31, 45). It is Tessie, then, who plants the seed, who gives voice to the dream of a better life. But even more important, it was she in the poem, "Ellen Chessser's Dream of Italy," who was the queen, the goddess, the archetype.

Tessie gone, Ellen is frantic and insists that they must not stay at the Bodine farm, that she must be with Tessie. Nellie slaps her and, seeing the "broken hair hanging in oily strings," Ellen is horrified as she wants "to plunge the knife. . . into the bent head" (27). But stay at the farm they do, and before autumn Ellen turns fifteen as "signs of woman" begin to appear (47). For a time she continues to dream the sort of dreams that she and Tessie had shared; she even tries to place Nellie into the scenes:

Her mother would sit in a gay chair on a gallery  
sewing a seam. . . saying gentle things. Or even  
suppose they were poor, then she would be sitting with  
her hair clean and combed, and she would call out,  
"Ellen, come see the sparks, they're in the chimney a-  
flyen like geese here and yon. . . ."

She wanted to sit beside Tessie and talk. . . . (47)

Poor Nellie can never fill the role that Tessie had filled, and Ellen, watching her mother sewing in reality, finally accepts her as she is:

The pipe had hung in her listless hand until it had fallen to the ground, spilling its dead ash, but now and then quick hands turned up a garment or opened a vent and searched along the inner seams, **eyes bent** close. (48)

Watching her mother thus, and recalling a recently overheard conversation between her parents in which Nellie told Henry to get Ellen some shoes for winter, that her own "old ones will do," the girl is overcome with tenderness for her mother: "She's my mammy, mine" (49). Thus, she acknowledges her love for her mother, but she feels no identity with her. Nellie shares what she has with her daughter, but it is not enough.

It is not material wealth that Ellen wants; it is the connection to and recognition by the goddess, a role model, one to whom she can "tell" things. Through the ritual of telling to Tessie, Ellen vivified her own dreams and experiences; she created meaning in her life through the sharing of dreams. The loss of Tessie, then, as receiver as well as teller, is magnified. It is not only a friend that Ellen has lost, but a necessary connection to her own expressed life, so she no longer feels a part of life. She is no longer a part of "the pageant of them going down the road" (30). She continues for awhile to store memories for retelling Tessie and finally runs away to find her, but still has not succeeded in her quest when Henry finds her and takes her home. Her only solace is that "she has sent word" to Tessie by a woman from another group of itinerants (62).



Thus, Ellen, symbolically cut off from both ancestral and psychological roots, begins her task of creating a Self, the first phase of which demands that she know and accept herself physically and socially. In her adolescent "point of contact," however, she gives "equal and diffused values to the voices within and without" when a young man, Joe Trent, comes on the scene to work for the summer (71). Ellen spends her days thinking about the young visitor and enjoys his eyes watching her, as well as she likes watching him. Something bemusing in his look troubles her, though: "Joe Trent's eyes were full of gentle looks, but they could draw down into little tubes of looks that went into her dress, under her skin, into her blood" (71). And she is puzzled by his beckoning to her in the fields, "careful to keep behind the redbud clumps" (75). This reminder of Tony Wright in "The Scarecrow" does not speak well for Joe Trent, but Ellen is so certain that he likes her and so caught up in her own dreams of "a body to tell things to," that his disparagement--"What I want with you, Louse Patch?"--falls "back unheeded into nothingness" (71).

Ellen's physical awakening is the issue here, not the young man, and Miss Roberts, who called this novel the "drama of the immediacy of the mind," connects it with the "clover" of experience, the "white clover of thought," and the importance of putting both thought and experience into words\*:

Feeling could not take words, so melted in and merged it was with the flowers of the grass, but if words could have become grass in Ellen's hand: "It's pretty stuff, clover a-grown. And in myself I know I'm

lovely. It's unknown how beautiful I am. I'm Ellen Chesser and I'm lovely." (73)

This beautiful passage is repeated a bit later: "It's unknown how lovely I am. It runs up through my sides and into my shoulders, warm, and ne'er thing else is any matter" (74). Her physical awakening, coupled with her desire of finding someone she "might know all [her] enduren life," conflicts painfully with the intuition of just what Joe Trent wants. But after seeing him pass with Emphira Bodine and refuse to even speak, she accepts the futility of her dreams and, managing to avoid him the rest of the summer, she finally feels his name "go out of her being slowly" (77).

The following January, a move to the Wakefield farm parallels the new phase that Ellen has moved into, the enjambment of childhood and womanhood, and a good portion of the novel is set on this farm. Miss Roberts said that the story was a "symphony brought into words," and each "movement" seems to coincide with a move.\* The new tenant house has "rooms full of hollowness and sharp sudden noises" when people talk. The voices and noises are from another time, however, because she remembers that she has "been there before," with a "tall white cat" when she was six years old. This new memory from the past is stronger than that of the farm they have just left. Indeed, her loft at Bodine's, where she spent the very night before seems far away, "beyond the white cat." As if to add to her confusion of memory, her first night in this new home recalls the poem "The Fox Hunt," and the hounds Sabina heard in the night

Her first night there was strange and sleepless, for a high wind blew. She heard mules running overhead in the wind. . . . There were hounds in the air before morning, rushing down through trees full upon the cabin. She could hear the beating of their feet above the pleading of their voices as they passed the door on the trail of the hunted thing. (82-3)

It is thus that Ellen's "coming out" is announced. The voices, the wind, the "hounds of identity" and the rushing sounds, herald the imminence--as well as the pain and confusion--of "life experience." Another major theme is introduced here--that of memory as both an index of consciousness and a necessity for integrating the Self before that Self can be integrated into the "pageant" of the "time of man." Ellen's memory reveals that she is an evolved consciousness--or soul--vital if she is to initiate a renaissance

She finds the new home very pleasing, "the pageant always flowing" of the outer world mirrored in her self, keeping "her aware of all her acts" (84-5). Her excitement and acute self-awareness are heightened by the wonder that "every act (is colored) with a haunting sense of its past or its relation to something." This place, then, finds its own rituals and pageantry in the great march of time and, as she is ready to take her place in the procession, Ellen becomes a debutante, trying different methods of walking down the steps in a "rush of well-being" and a "sense of pageantry" (86).

The next scene, in which she and Henry are digging rocks, his announcement that "no plow iron ever cut this-here hill

afore, not in the whole time of man," sets Ellen to wondering anew about those who have lived before. It is at the end of this scene that, seeing her shadow on the ground, she calls her name into the wind--but receives no response (87-9). She is, in other words, at the door of adulthood, just on the point of stepping into the world of relationships, the world of others, but in order to do so, she must have others to reflect herself back to herself. In the absence of any others, she watches herself in the sunlight, "stepping about to search out the ways of her movements," and finally decides that she is ugly (90). Nature and spring are healing, though, and she soon decides that her "searching eyes" and "heavy-shod feet" do not "have to be any other way" (91). Her acceptance of her appearance increases as her duties increase and she takes her place in the pageant of the farm. She no longer watches herself in her shadow, but sees parts of her body--"her own clear eyes and brown lashes. . . a few brown freckles. . . the little hollow in her throat"--in the mirror (94). This clearer vision of herself has been provoked by the rituals of her new "office," as well as by an awareness that she exists in the minds of others:

She was keenly aware of the *ceremony and aware of her figure* rising out of the fluttering birds, of all moving together about her (*italics added*). . . . People knowing her, having her in their thoughts, saying things to her, coupling her acts with their acts. . . she felt herself spreading over the farm. (95-6)

The lovely but fragile sense of recognition that comes through shared rituals cannot, however, keep at bay the "perpetual

sadness of youth," the immanent yearning to know "what for." The emotion itself is so vague she is "unable to gather her sense of it into a thought":

"Oh, why am I here and what is it all for anyway?

What is it is a-beaten down on my breath? . . . On and on, without end, she felt herself and all other things going, day and night and day and rain and windy weather, and then sun and then rain again, wanting things and then having things and then wanting. . . .

And then you're old. And what did you ever have that was enough? And what was it all for anyway? . . .

Voices beat on her memory but they made hollow meaningless noises. "Open the gate, Ellen!" It was nothing but sound running up and down. (96-7)

In the chaos of life and memory and meaning, she is doing what her creator herself did, "selecting out of consciousness a vein, a flow, which reveals the whole flow."\* In an effort to grasp some sort of pattern, Ellen repeats the only certainty she has, this time the references to her physical body more specific, reflecting not only her new "office," but her budding womanhood, as well:

It's no known how lovely I am. I'm a-liven. My heart beats on and on and my skin laps around me and my blood runs up and it runs down, shut in me. It's unknown how lovely. (97)

Later on in the summer, coming upon the grave of Judge Gowan, a powerful local resident in his day, she finally realizes that the "what for" of life is just that--it is life and nothing else

matters, whether it be fortune, fame or poverty. And with all the fervor of youth she embraces life and throws off the bondage of class distinction: "I'm better'n you! . . . I'm a-liven and you ain't! I'm better! I'm a-liven! I'm a-liven!" (103)

Not long after, Ellen's own intuitive voicing of her physical loveliness and life force are reiterated by others: "A white man said it, a nice fine fellow. He says, 'Who's that-there fine looken gal over at Wakefield's?'" (108) It is at this point that Ellen begins to project herself totally into the "noise rushing in a mirror," begins obsessively seeking validation from without and identification with others. The first occasion takes place in the room where Ellen is helping to strip tobacco:

Ellen saw herself in Effie Turpin's body as it stood by the door. . . . The flesh under Effie Turpin's eyes was her own flesh and Effie Turpin's rough cold hands were her own. . . . Ellen tore off the leaves care-carefully and laid them in their piles, a joy in her being because someone had come, another, almost herself but separate in body. (110)

Added to the joy of finding Effie is a new role model, Miss Cassie McMurtrie, owner of the most elegant farm in the region, beautiful, wealthy and kind, and who can "ride a horse like a man" and do the milking if the hands are gone (114).

Soon, "life [runs] more quickly" as Ellen makes friends with a group of young neighbors who are, at first, "five shapes lying beyond herself," but she soon feels "them become six, herself making part of the forms, herself merged richly with the

design" (126-28). Miss Roberts called this period in Ellen's life "the high pitch of youth. Here is the social being which scarcely divides itself from the group, which loves broadly through the entire troop of girls and boys."\*

The "troop" entity, reinforced by such phrases as "all together," "falling into pairs or flowing together," as well as constantly shared activities, is a great pleasure to Ellen, who loves hearing her name changed to "Elleen," "gathering her in with Dorine in the sounding of the name" (128-134). She does not hear the note of alarm sounded here in the coupling of names; carried out of herself by her joy in belonging, she forgets the power in a name. Indeed, she forgets to the extent that she chooses for herself Jonas Prather. Had she reflected on the folk saying about a "Joner," she would have averted a great deal of pain, pain prophesied by two parallel incidents, the infidelity of Scott MacMurtrie and the women's conversation at the time of "the great autumn moon" (153).

Cassie and Scott MacMurtrie are the ideal couple of the neighborhood; They are wealthy, handsome, do many things together, and are supportive of their neighbors, physically and financially. However, the money belongs to Cassie, who is "the same height on a horse" as her husband and "not afraid of the devil himself" (147). Cassie is thus the "new" woman, she who is both self-directed and self-sufficient. But in her self-sufficiency, she is blind to her own prophetic nature and, perhaps, to her own physical nature and the tenuousness of a life built on name and others. It is impossible to know the intimate details of her life, viewed as they are through Ellen's

eyes. However, the entire community is soon aware that her own cousin, Amanda Cain--whose name is alarm enough--is betraying her in a sordid affair with Scott.

As well as sounding an alert about the noumenal power of a name and the danger of passion for passion's sake, this entire episode seems to signal the necessity of wholeness in an individual. But such wholeness comes only with time and experience. Youth by its very passionate and sensual nature is not integrated and willfully seeks out experience that may cause pain. Ellen listens as weary women at the autumn dance discuss the pain girls bring on themselves by the foolhardy way in which they choose husbands:

"If gals only knowed one is as good as another, but you couldn't tell a gal e'er a word."

"When they say 'Come see the bride,' I always say, 'I'd rather see her in ten year.'"

"Yes, teeth all gone. Back crooked."

"That's what the gals want, fast as they can. Can't wait to get in Lenie's shoes."

"For all Lenie's got one man's as good as the next one."

"A man that's got it in head to own a place. . . got get-up in his hide. . . . Beyond that under their shirts they're all just alike. . . . (155-57)

Ellen, missed from the dance, is called out and, leaving the voices of experience, joins in the dance that has run "away from the music and interposed steps of its own":

A wind began to blow. . . . The dance swept forward



more wantonly. . . . she hardly knew who held her. . . . gave herself up to the dance not caring if the end ever came. It swirled around her confusion and plucked it into greater chaos. She let the dance do what it would, and if it asked for her mouth she gave it that, now careless, and willing, or if it wanted her laugh or her smile or her arms. The wind blew and she felt as if she turned about in the center of a great wind, the other persons of the dance being but arms of the wind. . . . Her own mouth was in the wind, blown with currents, ready for any gale, curving to any kiss that came to it. Then the wind was fraying the beach sand and blinding her eyes. . . . Dust and dead leaves poured across the air. The dance melted away in the certainty of the wind. (158-59)

Giving herself to the dance and the "certainty of the wind"--so strong that it uproots trees--signals the culmination of Ellen's blind desire to be a part of the pageant. She no longer communes with Nature in its rhythms and creativity, but in its wildness. She no longer hears the small voice, but goes about her rituals thinking only of Jonas and how much she wants him. Finally, when he does come it is to tell her the distressing story of his affair with a filthy woman, Jule Nestor, whose child is purportedly his. Ellen is dismayed and confused, since "she had thought that Jonas was for her and that he was something to her, and Dorine had so thought, and Elmer and

Rosie" (163). She has given control to extrinsic voices, to the "wind rushing in a mirror," and has lost all balance between outer and inner life. In her pain and confusion, she decides to continue the relationship, even though she "hates his pain" and pities him and herself and "all men and women" (168).

One night she and Jonas decide to be married: "By the renewed light of the fire he looked at her anew. . . and she felt her beauty grow more full and rich when he called to it." The fire reflects their young passion, but another alarm is sounded in the voices of hounds baying in the night, "fixed voices," and in the form of a mouse that comes and goes, gathering crumbs. Ellen takes the creature to be a good "token," but that is unlikely in context. Henry has just spent hours explaining the family name, declaring that his grandfather was a "master hand for honey bees," and relating a long story about an aunt and uncle who, not heeding a bad omen on their wedding day, had thereafter lived in misery. Since this scene emphasizes Ellen's lineage and her ancestral connection to honey bees, she can share no identity with a scavenger who is a warning of impending evil in most folklore. And Jonas is obviously being compared to the mouse: Miss Roberts links the chosen mate to animals in nearly all her novels, generally on the wedding night. Thus, the scene bodes ill for Ellen, but another event is even more foreboding (177-187).

Scott MacMurtrie has closed the road through his land, shutting off the flow of traffic and provoking the anger of his neighbors, themselves sure that when Cassie hears of his act "there won't be enough of Scott MacMurtrie left to wad a gun

with" (175). However, one night in the early thaw of spring, Miss Cassie hangs herself, and Ellen is the first to respond to the Negress' wild ringing of the bell. Horror struck, the girl tries "to go into the stillness of Miss Cassie for reasons," but she cannot find any, not even infidelity. "Only life [is] comprehensible and actual, present. She [is] herself life" (192-93). It is not until Jonas takes a job elsewhere, promising to come back and marry her, then marries another, that Ellen can understand Cassie's suicide.

Ellen is at first beside herself with grief over her loss. Then, realizing that she has identified too closely with another, her grief is intensified:

. . . how did she, Ellen Chesser, ever come to such a state of need that a person outside herself, some other being, not herself, some person free to go and come and risk accidents far from herself, should hold the very key to her life and breath in his hand? Her tears flowed anew for pity of such a device among men.  
(220)

The next day at her chores she wanders to the hill where the MacMurtries had hunted the foxes; "a faint dying wind seem[s] to blow over her and a faint phrase blow with it, dimly sensed with the fanning of the wind, 'In the time of man'" (222). The "dying wind" discloses thus the end of this life experience as the phrase declares its universality. But, though the episode has ended, Jonas has "run into her blood and into her very breath." One moment she visualizes knifing him, the next she longs to see him come over the hill. Her confusion

increases as the spectre of Cassie's dead visage alternates with that of Jonas, and voices mingle in a psychological fog. Telling herself that "the return" will come, she clings to the knowledge of her individuated identity: "I'm Ellen Chesser. And I'm here, in myself" (228). But it is not until she images Cassie's body--"two men leaning over it, one preparing it for life and the other for death"; not until she leans "over the dead face until she merge[s] with its likeness, looking into the bulging eyes, the blackened mouth, and the fallen jaw" that she begins the return to herself:

Every human relation faded out and every physical tie.

Up was no more than down and out undistinguished from in. Friends and possessions and relatives were gone, and hunger and need. She was leaning over Miss Cassie as she lay on the floor--Ellen and Miss Cassie and no other. (229)

This very simple passage distills Miss Roberts' extraordinarily contemporary view on male/female relationships and, as Willa Cather had done before her in *My Antonia*, illuminates the very death-and-life struggle that women would have to go through in order to free themselves from the conjugal traps they had created for themselves. The discussion of the women at the dance outline what marriage had become--the repetition of coupling out of sexual instinct and unregenerated custom. Girls reached the age of fertility--also imaged in the autumn dance--and chose their mates out of physical urge and regional habit. The ceremony of choosing Jonas was not Ellen's own, then, but an unconscious mimicking of crystallized convention

which was no more than the empty rattle and patter of the rituals in "Sacrifice of the Maidens." The dead leaves blown by the wind echo the "endless cliffs of shale." But Ellen's story has far-reaching collective ramifications; it diagnoses a malady that threatened marriages across the societal spectrum, in Cassie's world as well as in that of the tenant farmer.

As with the poems and short stories, the entire sequence of the dance, Jonas and the MacMurtries must be considered in the light of Berkeley and studies in the new field of human psychology. In the first of Berkeley's dialogues, Philonus explains to Hylas that sensation can be either "pleasing," "painful," or "indifferent," and that the distinction resides not in the sensation itself, but in the perceiver, or the "thinking subject." He goes on to point out that sound is only sound, unless one has an experiential reference point by which to identify it--in this case, one cannot know that the sound coming from the street is a coach, unless one has experienced the sound of a coach in the street. Otherwise, it is only unnamed sound.<sup>2</sup> In the third dialogue Hylas finally understands: "But what has happiness or misery. . . to do with absolute existence? . . . It is evident, things regard us only as they are pleasing or displeasing: and they can please or displease, only so far forth as they are perceived."<sup>3</sup> Ellen and the other young women have no experience with love or relationships; therefore, basing their choices on what they perceive to be reality, as indicated by the lives and remarks of the "troop," they take their natural biological urges as a sound basis for marriage. They do not foresee that "under the shirts"

has nothing to do with absolute existence and can only bring joy or sorrow as they perceive and interpret their life experiences.

In 1925, C. G. Jung published a paper entitled "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," in which he declared such choices to be emblematic of marriage in the Western World. The paper could serve as an outline for the entire sequence of love, courtship and marriage in Ellen's story. According to Jung, the choices arise out of "unconscious motivations of instinct," and the "unconsciousness results in non-differentiation, or unconscious identity. The practical consequence of this is that one person presupposes in the other a psychological structure similar to her own."<sup>7</sup> Which is precisely what Ellen did with Jonas in assuming that he, despite his irresponsible actions, wanted the same kind of relationship she did. She failed to see that he was not of her "kind," despite their shared social level. Cassie made the same error: She interpreted her shared activities with Scott to mean that they were one. Their separate natures were signaled by the closing of the road and the neighbors' remarks: "'Let Cassie'. . . 'Bide your time and don't say e'er more word about that-there road. I give Scott a week now and that's all'. . . 'Let Cassie MacMurtrie do hit for us. I know Cassie Beal. She's made outen fire and hell'" (175). However, in the analysis of Jung, Cassie so identified herself with the marriage and with Scott, she could not "see her way out."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, she had, as had Ellen, apparently repressed her inner voice. It takes some effort to ignore an affair that lasts for two years in a small community. When Scott and Amanda Cain left, Cassie, no longer able to ignore

what the entire neighborhood had known for two years, apparently could not deal with the "dividedness" and the failure of that which ritual and tradition guaranteed. The irony is that the very basis on which such relationships are built provides the means for their destruction, the lesson that the dead Cassie has taught Ellen in a dramatic scene of sisterhood.<sup>§</sup>

Ellen is at last able to understand Cassie's pain, a pain great enough to impel denial of life. In ritualistically merging with Cassie, Ellen has accepted universal truth in the realization that there "is no birth of consciousness without pain."<sup>¶</sup> Her inner knowledge, however, that she is "created from within" comes to her in the night:

There a deep sense of eternal and changeless well-being suffused the dark, a great quiet structure reported of itself, and sometimes out of this wide edifice, harmonious and many-winged, floating back into blessed vapors, released from all need or obligation to visible form, a sweet quiet voice would arise, leisured and backward-floating, saying with all finality, "Here I am." (232)

Ellen, then, as woman on the edge of change can, by relying on her own strength and spirit, go voluntarily into the blackened face of death and affirm life:

A dissociation is not healed by being split off, but by more complete disintegration. All the powers that

<sup>§</sup> Feminine pronouns have been used in citing Jung, since in the German text no gender is implied.

strive for unity, all healthy desire for selfhood, will resist the disintegration, and in this way she will become conscious of the possibility of an inner integration, which before she had always sought outside herself. She will then find her reward in an undivided self.<sup>19</sup>

Ellen's "seeking integration outside herself"--in Tessie, the "pageant," the "troop," the dance, the wind, and Jonas--is echoed in the scene with her little cow when the Chessers make their next move, the Orkeys Farm. Ellen follows the heifer--who, since she "had never known life except the life of the herd," stubbornly resists leaving--"toward a moving destiny. . . going by some genius forward and on. . . until she was herself identified with the drifting beast" (234). It is in an epiphanic moment during this move that the young woman begins to consciously integrate the inner world of "I am" with outer "voices," to consciously become aware of her "tracks":

The mountains grew more definite as she looked back to them, their shapes coming upon her mind as shapes dimly remembered and recognized, as contours burnt forever or carved forever into memory, into all memory. With the first recognition of their fixity came a faint recognition of those structures which seemed everlasting and undiminished within herself, recurring memories, feelings, responses, wonder, worship, all gathered into one final inner motion which might have been called spirit; this gathered with another, an acquired structure, fashioned out of her experience of



the past years, out of her passions and the marks put upon her by the passions of others, this structure built up now to its high maturity. There was no name to come to her lips in this moment of faint recognition, a moment which dispersed itself in an emotion, for the word Jonas had been denied her, had been subtracted from the emotion it had caused and signified and with which it had been made one for many reasons. (237)

This passage details precisely Miss Roberts' intent concerning the process of integration, the noumenal power in a name, and the importance of both individual and racial memory.

Ellen cherishes her "undivided self" in her new home. The names of the new neighbors hold no enticement--"she would say them in mind, thinking nothing"--and though horses' hooves "grow nearer under a running crescendo of wheels," they are soon "swallowed into the hill." And in her tight little room she feels the "security to be within herself as if she were detached by the prison-like whiteness of the dry walls from her own memories, to begin her being anew." And two "shadows" on the wall elucidate the "life experiences" that new being will encounter: On one wall "the print of a clock was shadowed above . . . the only mark which had meaning on the dull white walls," and on another "her shadow was tall" (240-41). She has affirmed life in the face of death and no longer seeks validation from others, but she has not yet dealt with time, nor her own shadow, nor racial memory.

At this point Jasper Kent comes into her life, asking her to keep some money for him and assuming the heavy work when Henry breaks his leg and the burden of the farm falls to Ellen. His nearness and the shared confidence of the money locked in her trunk soon arouse Ellen's unfulfilled urges, and she awakens to the sound of her own voice crying out: "The word, 'Jasper,' still throbb[ing] in her own voice, still fitt[ing] itself into her throat, and beat[ing] at the stiff white walls" (272). It is not long before his form coming to meet her is "timed to the beating of her own life within her breast," and he comes to perform the ritual of his "telling." Very different from that of Jonas, Jasper's story is of a typical young man of the region who, though he had chased girls, gotten into fights and even spent a ten-day stretch in jail, is responsible and caring enough to work an entire year paying off a tombstone for his parents. Ellen does not make an immediate decision, but the next morning, hearing a "catbird singing clear fine phrases, decisive and final"--not the mockingbird associated with Joe Trent nor the mouse with Jonas--she knows that she will marry Jasper, "the word her mind had been seeking, now grown fixed and eternal" (279).

The affair flourishes, but Jasper is forced to leave after the Wingate barn is burned and he is accused of the crime. Nellie is certain Jasper is "gone for good," but even though Ellen is afraid because there is "nothing to bring him back except herself," she continues to affirm his return, this time refusing to invest power in the outer voices (294-300). And he does return, with papers in hand for them to wed and the desire

to "thresh the hide" of the man who has been spreading the rumor that he did indeed set the fire out of spite. Ellen, however, begins "to talk of themselves, taking more entire possession of his sense and his thought" (300-02). Her taking "possession" of Jasper in sense and in thought augments her locking away his money in her trunk, and reverses the Jonas affair. Jasper will not hold the "key to her very life and breath in his hand."

As Ellen and Jasper begin to make love, she possesses him entirely and, as always in Miss Roberts' work, the action takes place as if in a dream, removed from the stark reality of physical intercourse, placed on a spiritual level in a spiritual landscape:

She began to dream. Jasper was in her own body and in her mind, was but more of herself. She sank slowly down to the stone and to the leaves lying upon the stone, and the great bulk of the rock arose to take her. Dolomite stones shut over her and she was folded deeply into the inner being of the rock and she was strong with a strength to hold up mountains. Far away, as if it were beyond the earth, she heard a dog bark...and long after that the sour odor of a fox came up from below the cliff. . . . Jasper whispered something that was lost in the substance of her dream, but she remembered a little of the sweet odor of the fox and the barking of the dog, but after a while they were mingled with Jasper's unheard whisper and went when she sank more deeply into the stone. (305-06)

Woman, imaged as strong and as secure as Terra, takes the male as simply "more of herself" and in turn fits more deeply into the life of the earth. Ellen, as a beginning, as the "new Adam," welcomes both the wild and tame nature of man. It is she who must combine the two, an image that will be drawn clearly and finally in *He Sent Forth a Raven*, published nine years later. The portrayal of the relationship as fixed in stone here is repeated as the "ceremonial words" of the minister who marries them erect "a strong tower" (309-10).

The next day sees Ellen "greet herself intently" in what is in a sense another rebirth. Her joining with Jasper has increased her being, not diminished her. Feeling in herself a power of mythic proportions, she echoes the archetype of the protectress:

. . . she thought of herself in the vague being she had formerly held. . . , but this was now seen but dimly as something surpassed and rejected, and she gathered into a great mass that looked cunningly inward and spread outward in a vast determination: she would defend Jasper from every harm. . . . It was for this that she penetrated a strange land, for this her great strength arose and renewed itself at each instant. (309-12)

The allusion to a "strange land" recalls the wilderness and links Ellen with her foremothers. In this new wilderness which has "fallen" far from the vision held by those early pioneers, it is Woman who will protect and defend her own.

Her strength endures and is renewed over and over through the harsh years of childbearing and scratching a living out of hard, exhausted soil. When it seems one day that she is losing herself in "each occupation, buried in its momentary demand," she watches the dough she is kneading "rising and falling. . . renewed and sinking back and renewed, over and over, in a perpetual orbit." It is then that the small voice comes back to her: "Here. . . I am. . . Ellen. . . I'm here" (331-32). The great strength of that small voice withstands even Jasper's infidelity, during which Ellen gives birth to a strangely sick child, Chick. Seeming devoid of any feeling except pain, Ellen is like the hard clay that she turns over, "as if ~~she~~ were digging carefully to find some buried morsel, some reply" (362). Before the baby's birth, Jasper declared the child was not his and threatened to leave, to which Ellen replied that he would never leave, that he was "wedded deep" (358). And during Chick's pain-filled three years Jasper proves that he is indeed "wedded deep, "devoting many hours of the days and nights to the child, walking the floor, trying to make him smile. Like his name, Jasper is of fine, hard material, though as trapped by his history and geography as is Ellen, who intuitively understands that the "strong tower" of the marriage can weather infidelity. Her small voice of identity, her certainty in the Self she has now almost finished, keeps her from being devastated, divided, as she and Jasper are reunited over the dead body of ~~the~~ child, new life growing out of death.

Just as she never loses her sense of "I am," Ellen never loses her capacity to dream and to "tell," even though life has

taught her to separate the telling and dreams from reality. Sitting in a group of women at church, she listens as they tell of their husbands' gifts and generosity. Each is as poor as she is, and she hears their words as if hearing "a fairy tale of life, believing, and it [is] comforting to be there" (332). Then, one Sunday she joins in with the "fairy tale" that Jasper left some money on the shelf for her whenever she takes "it in head" to buy a new dress. This scene is neither a rejection of reality nor a surrender to the "voices," but a lovely entering into a ritual of sisterhood. Recognizing the "fairy tale," Ellen knows the truth that lies beyond the ritual--the human need to dream.

The final chapter weaves together all the strands of Ellen's being. Her two oldest children are teenagers, Hen a "man grown," and Nannie a pretty thirteen-year-old. Little Melissy voices the need of each generation to fixate: "'I won't be old . . . , I'll grow up but that's all I aim'" (368). Dick repeats the young Ellen's desire to know: "'I aim to read books. . . . I aim to know everything. . . . It's in books is found the wisdom of the world, they say'" (370). Then, Luke Wimble comes into the country to sell fruit trees. Luke, full of light talk and play, joins in dancing with Ellen's children, pressing Ellen to join in also, and she sees her shadow on the ground:

. . . her feet were light and her steps quick, as eager as Hen's or as light as Nannie's, even more eager and light. She saw her shadow on the ground as as she danced and she could scarcely take her eyes from it, for it was the shadow of a girl with slim an-

kles and straight round thighs and supple shoulders.

(376)

The following autumn days find Ellen "seeing inwardly her slim shadow as it danced. . . , or she walk[s] proudly erect. . . , living lightly and freely with the passing days" (376). This is a totally different Ellen from that one who watched her shadow and decided it was ugly. This is a woman who has integrated her shadow, a shadow that has come upon many a "snagbush," and sees it "inwardly," accepting all of it.

Her total acceptance of her Self permits Ellen now to fit that Self into racial memory, that great chain of womanhood, in both the past and the future. At first she sees herself "identified with Nannie, merged with her in the lightness of limb and in the vague, misty outward-flowing thought of her mind" (376-77); later, it is with her mother:

. . . , Ellen would remember Nellie, from first to last, a structure which she knew almost entirely in her senses, her deep inner knowledge which lay behind memory.

. . . , Ellen would merge with Nellie in the long memory she had of her from the time when she had called from the fence with so much prettiness, through the numberless places she had lived or stayed and the pain she had known, until her mother's life merged into her own and she could scarcely divide the one from the other.

. . . , she would penetrate her own history, into memories long habitually forgotten. (380-81)

Immediately after "merging" with Nellie, Ellen puts her dream of the goddess into perspective, as she tries to remember Tessie

West, "but there [is] no way to think of her except as something brightly shining and diffused through the years of the roads." She finally puts the memory of Tessie to rest, declaring "'If I met Tessie on the road. . . , I'd maybe not know it. . . , Or maybe if I knowed her now I'd say what a durned fool woman that is, to talk eternally about tom-foolery" (382). Ellen no longer needs a model; she is one. She first had to become a self-reliant individual, independent of her racial-cultural matrices. Now, in moving back toward racial consciousness, she can absorb rather than be absorbed by that consciousness. At the core of this coming together, the externalization of archetypal realities occurs. Luke Wimble eloquently expresses this externalization in describing what Ellen has done with life:

'You're a bright shiny woman, Ellen Kent. . . . They take the sweet outen the grass even, and even outen the mud. Some of it dark, the wild honey, and some strong and bitter, but all of it sweet, and it's the fruit of the bee.'

'You got the very honey of life in your heart.'

(378-79)

Ellen has broken the vicious economic, social, spiritual, and conjugal bonds that had bound her mother and so many like her. Life has come to Ellen, and instead of seeing it as a "strange, long thing without alternative" as Nellie had, Ellen has created the "honey of life" and is thus bonded with life itself as she "stop[s] and remember[s] life":

Life and herself, one comprehensible and entire, without flaw, with beginning and end, and on the instant



she herself was imaged in the lucid thought. A sense of happiness surged over her and engulfed her thinking until she floated in a tide of sense and could not divide herself from the flood. . . . (382-83)

She is now prepared for heroism and proves it, like some great avenging angel, when Jasper, once again accused of barn-burning, is dragged from his bed and whipped with leather whips in the night:

She walked out of the house, her bare feet sinking into the cold mud, her night garment limp against her body as she went swiftly through the damp air. She walked into the circle of men and stood in the bare space left for the whips, and her coming was so headlong that blows fell upon her shoulders and on her breast before she was seen. She came with hard words and a deep malediction, laying curse on curse, speaking into the black rag faces without fear, careless of what came to her for it. (388-89)

The next night finds the Kents once more on the road, heading for "some better country," each of them voicing dreams and taking "their own turnings" (394-95). Having become one with life, having recognized her place as Woman in the "time of man," and having created a Self out of her Adamic nature, Ellen awakens anew the great dream of Pioneer Woman and is free to go to "some better country."

*My Heart and My Flesh* (1927)

Miss Roberts' second novel, *My Heart and My Flesh*, a dramatic articulation of Woman after the Fall, is the story of Theodosia Bell, a superb incarnation of Prometheus, "a woman who went to hell and returned to walk among you," who siezes anew the creative fire of life from the gods of the institutions.\* In order to do so, she must suffer the loss of all to which she is attached, as did Job, and go through the Promethean struggle of unchaining herself and establishing a Self as a powerful, creative force. Threading through the novel, these three myths provide the superstructure for Theodosia's eventual triumph over "hell and the grave."

The Prologue presents the entire background and themes of the novel through the mind of the child, Luce, the knower. Her mind runs up and down the streets of Anneville, into alleys, Sunday School classes, schools, librairies and the black neighborhood, missing nothing. Earl Rovit notes the Prologue as "forcibly reminiscent of Marcel Proust's 'Overture' in *Remembrance of Things Past*."<sup>1</sup> The comparison is exact, sharply underscored by a Bergsonian/Proustian role of memory as an invocation of the past uncorrupted by habit or interpolation. The Prologue also recalls the opening chapters of the Book of Amos, in which the prophet sees, as does Luce, the pollution and lasciviousness of his people and exhorts them to seek, not repent, promising them a land of plenty. According to Mr. Rovit, the passage contains "some of Miss Roberts' finest

writing," of which one of the "finest achievements" is Luce's fantasy city, Mome, "perhaps a portmanteau combination of 'my home.'"<sup>12</sup>

At the story level, Mome, superimposed on Anneville, is a magical metropolis, where every deed or disaster grows to "heroic proportions"; where "marble causeways [run] up to marble stairs and tall white walls [give] out onto high balconies, cool and fresh in a sweet wind, the people eager and exact and clear, intent with being." Indeed, in Mome there is "nothing commonplace and dreary" (16-17). Mome bespeaks the ideal, the Shangri-la that humans dream of establishing. Between Mome and Anneville, however, falls the "shadow" (T. S. Eliot's term as well as Jung's) of man's carnal nature, creating--through unregenerated rituals, decadence of brute passions, disconnection from the heroic myths, and compulsive seeking of selfhood in the outer world--a grotesque parody of the ideal.<sup>13</sup> In a note on *The Time of Man* Miss Roberts discusses the decalage: "The social order fails and all social relations fail. . . . Man the monster walks."\* Her horror at the "disorder of history," inheres in the frantic searchings of Theodosia, as well as in Luce's Prologue.<sup>14</sup>

The handling of disunity in the Prologue provides a rare glimpse of Miss Roberts' approach to a story, especially the imbricate texture intrinsic in her work. Here, encapsulated in the juxtaposition of the two towns, is the conflict between the collective and the individuated consciousness; the "wasteland" of a world bereft of myth, which can be renewed only through development of the individual will; the inertia of

institutionalized rituals masquerading as ideals which only an integrated Self can transmute into reality by regenerating those same rituals. Here is human imagination, creativity and energy epitomized in Mome--its "seeds of insufficiency" inherent in the nature of creation itself--layered with its own decadence in which is contained both death and the promise of rebirth in the fecundity of that death (again echoing the prophet Amos). Adding more imbrices, more complexity, and thereby mimicking nature itself, Miss Roberts uses the same process, or "pattern," at the familial and individual levels; that is, what is true of Mome and Anneville is true of the Bell family and of Theodosia.

The "layering" process created difficulties for Miss Roberts in choosing a title for Theodosia's story. Her first choice was *L'Abondante*, but no word in English has quite the same implication\*: *Abondante* connotes a sense of eternally "full to overflowing." "Horn of Plenty" translates to *corne d'abondance* in French, and that is about as accurate an image as one can denote. Thus, Theodosia, the "gift of God," is the embodiment of the nature of creation itself; Mome the ideal, the "paradise" those early Kentuckians envisioned--or the South, or all of modern civilization; and Anneville the decadence of that ideal which holds the promise of renewal, "full of decay which is change, not evil."\* At all layers and in each emergence of human creativity, then, "it is the beauty of the thing itself welling up within itself continually in a constant rebirth, a resurrection. At any point it partakes of the whole nature of itself--like an onion" (27).

To its denizens, ignorant of and distant from their noble beginnings, Anneville is still Mome--"You cannot make them remember."\* Its religious rituals, however, have become "laborings with odorless words and unregenerated sayings," and the "foreknowledge of God" has settled "to the odors of the yarn carpet and the dry melancholy of the village Sabbath" (17-18); education has become "such dissipated and trivial statements as  $a-b=6$ ," and "the fruit of knowledge passed downward perpetually from the older groups" more "grotesque as it descend[s]" (24); and those "distinctive Kentuckians" mingle irresponsibly in a black-and-white orgy:

A white man was the father of Letty's youngone, and old Mr. Preacher Benton was, God knew, a feisty old cuss, after Mag. She, Moll, had nursed old Mrs. Putty in her deliriums and listened to her talk all night, and the men that woman had had in her time would fill a prayer-meeting. . . . Old Jonas Beatty smelled like a billygoat, and Miss Jodie Whippleton tried to hide her dead brat in the calf lot but the hogs got in and rooted it up for her. (22)

But if Anneville emblems the fall of Mome, the Bell family emblems the fall from noble beginnings, the focus of both the decay and the renewal. Old Anthony Bell is still quite the aristocrat, but he is playing a role, "the play enhanced," because he has lost all of his property and no longer has any patrimonial ties to the past (3). His son Horace, "the Don Juan of the Kentucky villages" (243), is father of two mulatto women, Americy and Lethe, and an idiot boy, Stiggins, "a link between

what men keep and what they throw away," "dropped in the alley behind the jail" of the "half-wit, Dolly Brown" (100-01). Horace--whose name is a mix of "horn," Horite, an ancient cave-dweller, and Horus--is so ego-centered, so certain of his male rights that he makes no effort to hide his debauchery. He even joins his wife and daughters in song on his way to a "gambling party with men or an evening with some woman . . . , taking a pride and delight in his great running voice that emasculate[s] the piano" (58). The "ideal" of Southern aristocracy is a parody, as is his wife, Charlotte, though she devotes her time to the church and her daughters:

Luce looked at her and felt her presence reach past the white dress as if there were some large thing inside. Then she laid her bare. She tore away the clothes from around her shoulders and opened her body. She emptied the heart out of it and flung out the entrails. . . . She went searching down through blood and veins, liver and lights, smelt and kidney. Out came the fat, the guts, the ribs. She was looking for something. . . . Past the brains, past the skull bone. She flung everything aside as she took it out and went deeper, eager to find. Past the bones she came to the skin again, on the other side, and finally to the red of the yarn carpet. . . , nothing found, nothing left. Quickly she reassembled Miss Charlotte. Put together again, Miss Charlotte suggested something within. . . . (7-8)

This remarkable passage is but a small portion of that devoted in the Prologue to Charlotte, suggesting something of greater import--especially since she dies soon after the beginning of the book. Charlotte has everything a young woman could have wanted in 1900: Family name, wealth, talent, two daughters, a handsome husband who is a respected lawyer. Yet everything she has is a mockery except her daughters. Moreover, she herself is a parody of her pioneer foremothers, a fantasy, an ideal as empty as are the rituals of womanhood, love and marriage to which she pays lip service. Just as Horace epitomizes the degeneracy of the patriarchal system, Charlotte epitomizes the farce of ideal womanhood. Both are perversions of the ideal, creating a travesty of marriage, and both, as products of unregenerated rituals and unintegrated beings, are representative of Anneville. But it is the woman's weakness that permits the travesty and degradation, forcibly and hideously portrayed in Theodosia's dream at her grandfather's bedside:

"The street-parade," a voice said. . . .The procession was near at hand then, was passing by. It was made up of women, long strange creatures, not old but haggard, spent, thin, labored. Their long lank garments hung to their ankles, but their meager thin forms could be seen through the dejected attire they wore. They walked in an irregular procession, more than a hundred although they were uncouth. It was a terror to see them.

They converged toward something, focused toward some following object or person although their faces

were set forward and they marched on. . . .Then there was a great blare of sudden music. . . the object was at hand. It was the figure of a man, made of human flesh. . . .He was more than life-size, was of heroic proportions, *moving easily along on the float as if he were propelled by some unseen force engendered by the multitude of women* (italics added). He was one, one man, heroic in size, bursting with strength and life, made of flesh like a man. He stood erect, his limbs apart, in a lewd pose. He was naked. On his body were marks then; on his chest they began, as small warts sprinkled over his breast, but lower, on his upper abdomen, they were larger and were shaped like small teats. They became larger as they descended over his abdomen and became more alive, each one more living than the last. They were rigid with life and were pointed forward toward the women. (178-79)

This vivid portrayal of phallus worship by servile women is probably the most dramatic statement in literature on the conditions of male-female relationships early in the 20th century. Adding to the gravity of the scene itself is the significance of a parade in the New World myth--the aggressive glorification and public affirmation of deeply held cultural values expressing the ideal. This parade of "ideal womanhood" sanctions and perpetuates the choices of those foolish girls in Ellen's story whose ungoverned desire traps them in lives of drudgery. And just as foolishly as they, Charlotte and Tennie Burden--indeed, all of the women of Anneville--have lost their



vitality, and very lives, because of their servility to a phallogocratic world.

Here, Miss Roberts forcefully lays the blame for women's oppression at their own feet. "Man" is undifferentiated in power, whether "man-formed" or "woman-formed," but it is Woman, the "spinning spider of culture" in *Jingling in the Wind*, her parts "deeply and dangerously inside" who chooses the direction of civilization and who is thus to blame for arranging her own oppression. Lewis P. Simpson notes an even broader purport: Citing Freud's central insight as the "transference of sexuality into history," he argues that Miss Roberts "grasped the possibility that the implication of sexuality in history may be the most momentous event in modern history."<sup>13</sup> Certainly in the creating of a Self in history and a history through that Self, all women in Miss Roberts' stories, whether "heroes" or tangential characters, must must exert what Simpson calls an "executive will" over both their own and the collective perception of sexuality.<sup>14</sup> In order to do so, they must reject the blind belief in an ideal and integrate that ideal with the reality over which they have control.

The power of the collective ideal over an individual is clearly depicted as Theodosia sees herself divided in the dream: "Her own self stood at her elbow. She turned quickly about, toward her self, and she knew a deep wish, an ardent prayer that her self had not seen this last" (179). Though she recognizes the truth, it conflicts so painfully with her received images she rejects it in the same moment. As a product of her environment, Theodosia has herself been raised to be an ideal,

"spread[ing] a trail of herself down the platform as she goes proudly first, the other girls walking on her steps, setting feet down where she guid[es], she leaving a comet-train of herself behind to be entered" (12).

Theodosia has been born with all that Ellen Chesser lacked: "She has the pride of Family, of Wealth (as goes in the South of [the] country), a pride in being the honored and petted child. . . , in personal charm and in popularity with friends. . . , in musical skill and in a boundless ambition to play the fiddle well."\* Despite all that she has been blest with, however, she senses a lack. Being more self-conscious than Ellen, she can analyze more. In recollections of happy times, "a good place in which to be," in admiring words from others, and in caresses, gifts, all the people singing in the church," she finds "in the seed of each happening an insufficiency. There [is] never enough" (52). Even music, as much as she loves it, provokes an angst:

Around her a peculiar, scintillating half-brilliance spread like a fog of things half-known, half-sensed; it caught at the imagination and kindled it but gave it insufficient fuel. . . . These were days of unsatisfied knowing. One could never have enough. (78)

As she grows older, the yearning takes clearer focus, is given a word: "The soul, where and what [is] it?" (87). It is still only "a half-whimsical gaze" that she turns inward, however, because "the noise outside" is too rich to give much thought to the question (88). Nevertheless, as she matures she becomes a woman searching for regeneration, a soul, a Self. Theodosia

does not realize early on that there is nothing on the inside of anybody or anything in Anneville, because she has adopted the ideal. She, too, finds her identity in the external world, since there has been no sense of Sisterhood or Selfhood passed down to her. All she knows is family pride and is ignorant of its fraudulence.

Theodosia's world is "too much with her," to paraphrase Wordsworth's sonnet, as she runs "swiftly from one thing to the next" (61). Lacking any notion of Sisterhood, she hardly notices when her sister dies, then her mother. Unlike Ellen Chesser, who yearned for "someone like her," Theodosia has such an abundance of friends and well-being, she can lie abed and select:

Her speculating mind would run forward into the plans for the day, so many hours with the music, the fiddle, the harmony, the piano; or it would center briefly about some dress she was designing. . . ,and over this or through it would glide her floating senses as they drifted in the void supported by strong fingers on which she lay drooping, circled by strong arms. (82)

It is in the midst of her plenitude, as it was with Job, that loss enters Theodosia's life: Miss Roberts wrote that the "method was a steady taking away until there was nothing left but the bare breath of the throat and the simplified spirit."\* First, Anthony Bell falls ill, and her music teacher tells her the devastating news that she will never be a great violinist. Then, in searching for some document that her grandfather seems worried about, she finds the family papers and discovers the

loss of the property and the horrible truth about her father. The pain of the discoveries evokes memories of her mother and Annie, forcing her gaze inward, setting her in search of her soul and her connection to others in "family memory":

Her outer vision dulled by the fire and by weariness, her inner vision heightened, and she began to divide her being, searching for some soul or spirit. Her search took her into her grandfather's being where it touched accurately to her own. . . .Where, she questioned, is his soul? . . . When she had found this entity in her grandfather she would, she thought, be able to identify it within herself. (100-02)

However, Theodosia has nothing to identify. She herself is a shell, defined by family history, roots, society, even music. She has not the core of identity that Ellen had, and without that core there is nothing to reflect the outside world and provide "points of contact."

Her losses continue as her friends move away, one suitor dies and another falls passionately in love with a new girl in town. Any vestiges of respect for her father die as Horace, seeing that his daughter is a lovely young woman of twenty, tries to force himself on her. Theodosia in desperation tries to merge with the memory of Conway, her dead friend, "the last fact utterly," and her half-sisters, Americy and Lethe, in a burlesque of Sisterhood (142). She tries to penetrate their beings, see their thoughts, as if by finding them she will find herself, but identity eludes her. As she catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror above Americy's bureau, "it seem[s] to her

that she live[s] with only a part of her being, that only a small edge of her person lift[s] up into the light of the day" (144).

After her grandfather's death and her father's repeated advances, her search becomes an obsession and she seeks points in time in which she is "attached to the earth" (186). Then, going to the home of Lethe and Americy the day after a festival, she finds Americy drunk and Lethe intent on killing her husband, Ross, because of his infidelity. In a scene filled with violence and lust, the drunken Americy in incestuous embraces on the bed with the hideously cackling Stiggins, Theodosia, overcome by her own hatred, "mingl[e]s with Lethe's anger and hate," and goads her to murder Ross (194). The nightmarish quality of this scene echoes the names of Lethe and Stiggins and foreshadows Theodosia's descent into hell. Two rivers are associated with Hades: The Styx, which represents the borderland between the dead and the living --and from the remarks about Stiggins and the context, it is probable that his name is a transposition of Styx; it also points out that senseless, brute, sexual desires lead to neither life nor death, but to the borderland of lost souls, recalling those "spent" women in the parade. In the second river, the Lethe, human souls are baptized in the waters of forgetfulness before they return to take a new earthly body. Theodosia, then, has found the outer limits in which a being can be completely immersed in others, in history, without regenerating the dream and rituals which created that history. Americy's name gives the entire scene a much broader significance and links it with the societal level

indicated in the Prologue: "A whole continent to name an incontinent hour" (243).

The morning after the violent scene Theodosia is suffering from a fever and, upon finding that Lethe has indeed killed Ross, is certain that she herself has committed the crime. In her merging with Lethe, she has found not forgetfulness, but more guilt; she has, however, in her grotesque "baptism," prepared her "return," though not yet aware of it. At this point, every attempt she makes turns to a burlesque of its intent, as it was with Job.

Her next step in her descent into hell is a move to her Aunt Doe's farm, the farm that she remembers as fruitful and bountiful. Now lying in waste, it is inhabited by a half-mad, miserly hag who had been her aunt, and starving, savage hounds. Most significant is the death of the Mnemosyne vine, brought from Virginia long ago and grown to more than a hundred feet to the eaves of the old mansion when Theodosia was a child. Her uncle had told her that it meant "Memory, the mother of all, the seed of the mind," and she had wondered if it might be "the best thing in the world" (50-2). Its death, denoting Theodosia's liberation from the past, frees her to begin anew. The sordid "sins" and emptiness of her family's past had turned memory as seed power, as mother, creator and nurturer, into a grotesque perversion of its purpose, its ideal intent as "the secret of the mind" (50). And, instead of leading to birth and creativity, Theodosia's family memory has led her to pain, sorrow, and guilt. The force of the past is now dead, and she is free of the entangling roots, but her pain and sorrow are not

over, because she has not yet located her soul, her "I am," nor does she yet understand the commonality of human experience. She has not yet, in Biblical terms, "taken upon herself the sins of her fathers." She risks entrapment in her own humanity and sexuality until she finds that "Source" within herself that will allow her to constantly and simultaneously re-create her Self by her own definition and realize her relation to all others who "proceed from the Source." "

Earl Rovit's description of the next eighteen months of Theodosia's life is eloquent: "The setting and atmosphere are surrealistic; the house, the characters, Theodosia's state of mind, the wild dogs--all are blurred into indistinct but insistent shapes which howl at the fringes of the consciousness."<sup>17</sup> The passage is truly "remarkable," but the most remarkable portion comes near the end of the girl's trial by fire. Her already-fragile physical state has steadily worsened on her starvation diet of cornpone baked on the hearth and for which she must fight the dogs. Frank, a suitor still on the scene, is aware of the ghastly conditions, but when she tells him she is starving, he only makes love to her. And she, not yet having a Self, even in her hell depends on Frank--the phallus--for renewal: "Half dreaming, her body knew that it would be renewed by his presence, that her beauty would be restored by his praise" (248). This is diametrically opposed to the image of Ellen's taking Jasper into her and protecting him; to Patty's absorption of Hiram in "I Love My Bonny Bride; and to Perry Lancer's wholeness in "Love By the Highway."

Frank's selfishness and unconcern augments Theodosia's confusion and it is in this near-starvation delirium that she begins to hear voices. There are three of them, recalling both Job's three "comforters" and the three days that Christ spent in the "bowels of the earth" between his crucifixion and resurrection. The screeching voices alternate between listing the self-serving vices of humans and hurling accusations at Theodosia for participating in Ross' murder, for the death of Annie, for not "honoring" her father. Of singular import is their discussion of the "categories of the flesh," of which the first is the mouth, recalling King Solomon's statement that "all the labor of man is for his belly"; and their description of man as a "ten-thousand-footed serpent, every foot a feeler out to feel something," with a "the chiefest part set in the middle, a hungry enlargement in the alimentary gut" and "another maw in the lower middle" (245-46). This passage parodies Miss Roberts' image of the spider as mind and Theodosia's earlier noble ideal of the communion between members of humankind: "Here in the adagio man spreads out the infinite tentacles of his multiform being, his personality, and lays, kind for kind, each sensitive feeler upon a like that protrudes from the Source" (152). The voices outline the depths to which the race has fallen.

Tortured to her limits, Theodosia hurls her cry into the abyss of nothingness: "Oh, God, I believe, and there's nothing to believe" (247). Her anguished cry echoing those others of "My God, why hast thou forsaken me" hurtling down through the centuries, she has suffered the sins of her fathers and the alienation of all flesh, sobbing Shelley's twin "torturers" of



"hope and despair," into the darkness of non-being, just as Job exclaimed from his ash pit, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"<sup>10</sup> Hounded by "Jove's tempest-walking hounds" of identity, she has been stripped nearly to "the simplified spirit" and is now ready to leave life and Frank (44). Leaving Frank is the most difficult, because he is "a menace within her own body where it reach[es] toward life" (252). The intimation here that sexuality may be the ultimate, strongest urge to life illuminates the formidable role it plays in this novel. The role of sexuality in history as viewed by Freud is also expanded.

Theodosia's solution to the power of compulsive sexual urges is to replace the will to live by the will to die. Having made that decision, at Frank's next appearance, when the dogs go mad and attack him, she encourages them. The terrified man shouts at Theodosia to pull them away, that he "what he wants in life" is to marry her (253). But she joins the dogs in their hissing until he leaves. Then she prepares to drown herself, and it is at this moment, as she sees herself embrace death in the waters of "forgetfulness," the ultimate decay of the flesh, that she is reborn a Self, whole and transcendent. That she has a new body and a new life. And, despite the clear reference to the sacrament of baptism, the language of the scene is profoundly sexual, even orgasmic: ". . . the new apparition spread through her members and tightened her hands. . . . quivered joy throughout her senses. Her body spread widely and expanded to its former reach" (255). It is at that moment

that "all that she had sought in life wells up within her" and she is given a word: "Tomorrow" (256).

This scene recalls that of Jesus and Nicodemus who questioned "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus' reply was that he must be "born of the water and of the spirit." In most discussions of archetypes (including that of Jung), water, as receptive and "inactive," is a feminine element; spirit, as "active will" or thrust, is masculine. In that light, Jesus' reply would indicate that both feminine and masculine principles must be integrated within the individual Self. Theodosia's search for her Soul, then, has led her to just such an experience. In the moment of her rebirth, she integrates both male and female principles, the phallus and the womb, the animus and the anima. She is thus androgynous, and the promise of eternal renewal, the "I am" of the Soul she had sought, comes from her Self, like "an onion," and she cries with Ellen, "I'm alive!" (256)

"A woman who went to hell and returned to walk among" the living, Theodosia has transmuted the duality of male and female and the polarity between compulsive instincts and transcendent spirit--and, thus, the ideal of the myth and the decadence of the present--into into a creative, centered consciousness ready to begin anew.\* And, like Ellen after her heroic act, she is free to leave.

Her new Mome, "Spring Run Valley," is one of those rich, rolling Central Kentucky valleys, where the world seems forever new. Nature is rich and fertile, the fields full of calves and the houses full of children, and the people "intent on being" as

they were in Mome. It is in this valley that Theodosia finds Caleb Burns, who names his animals, "says out loud anything that might come into his head," and makes "no mint of money, but by golly he makes mighty good cows" (286). Another Caleb, meaning "dog," when sent by Moses to "spy out the land" of Canaan reported that land as "flowing with milk and honey," just as Boone had reported of Kentucky, reinforcing Miss Roberts' image of the Wilderness as a new land of promise. For Caleb's fidelity and good news, he was awarded the fertile land of Hebron, (no doubt the basis of the name "Burns") when Joshua divided the promised land amongst the people. Theodosia has, then, chosen creativity, sensitivity, fidelity, openness and vision over "blood and bulk."

In her new world Theodosia soon takes charge of time: Midi, one of the women in the village, is the undisputed timekeeper, her confirmation of a date unquestioned, the method of the men "wanting" (285). It is not long before her authority is joined by Theodosia's--a lovely ritual of handing-down in Sisterhood--since the younger woman, as the new teacher, keeps the roll at school: "'Midi's right. It's been nine years. . . . Nine is on the roll book'" (292). Thus, it is she who controls time and memory instead of being controlled by them. And secure in her new role, she can with Caleb reconstruct Anneville and family memory: "Anneville, named for a woman, Anne Montford. . . . 'Mother to Theodosia Montford, grandmother to Anthony Bell.'" (293). This passage acts as a renvoi to the Prologue and reinforces both the cyclical nature of history and the promise of renewal. In the last passage of her prelude, Luce says that

Mome, the ideal city, may be "disposed," but the idea is still alive, "as nobody's useless old cat, having been stoned three times to death," reappears "on a woman's doorstep" to "drink warm milk" (28). Miss Roberts wrote in her note that "Flowing out of [man] forever is the imperative need, the 'desire' for some good way, some harmonious plan by which to live."\* As Caleb says, a man "looks forward toward a city. . . but looks backward to a garden, Eden," again recalling the necessity of duality, Blake's "contraries," and the being as the point of reconciliation (291).

Theodosia, the point at which all is reconciled in this novel, is imaged as "Aphrodite among the herds" in her new Eden (296). And though not named Hermes or Mercury, Caleb does have somewhat alchemical powers and knowledge of ancient mysteries of initiation, however earthy may be their application. These qualities, coupled with Theodosia's new name and androgynous rebirth, herald the possibility of a new world in which sexuality will give birth to neither tyranny nor oppression, but to the integration of both male and female principles necessary in realizing that world.

Theodosia Bell was not born with the central core of "amness" that Ellen Chesser had, what Rovit calls an "ordering mechanism," but she has an unrelenting need to find wholeness<sup>12</sup>: "Some abundance within herself would not let Theodosia acquiesce completely to the hour, to any hour or to any experience, as being sufficient" (46). As Ellen created the "honey of life" out of her meagre "clod," Theodosia has--out of her abundance of and participation in myth and racial memory--created her Self,

transmuted the duality of human existence and transcended the "shadow" of Eliot's poem. And instead of allowing her world "of antique gentry brought low" to end in a "whimper," she will create a new one as did her predecessor, Diony Hall Jarvis, nearly 150 years earlier.<sup>20</sup>

*The Great Meadow* (1930)

Although *The Great Meadow*, Miss Roberts' historical novel of those who pressed into the Kentucky Wilderness, "on fire with their own flame," was not published until 1930, she had been working on it for some fifteen years.\* The saga of the land itself, a great mythopoeic Eden, underlies the drama of the "flame" and vision of the adventurers. But unlike so many novels of the Western Frontier, this one does not unfold in an atmosphere of conquest and exploitation, but of reciprocity, with Nature providing the energy of chaos and the mind of man providing the order and re-creation. The Great Meadow of Kentucky permitted simultaneously the remembrance of the garden and the promise of the New World, alluded to by Caleb Burns. Descriptive names used by the longhunters pervade the dialog-- Eden, paradise, garden--evincing the deeply held dream of the land as a country that would "breed up a race of heroes" and recalling its mythic proportions (13).

And if Kentucky embodies the myth of the New Eden, Diony Hall Jarvis embodies the essence of the Frontier Woman. She is the archetype. Named for Dione, one of the Titans and mother of Aphrodite, she is a perfect foremother for Theodosia and a large enough figure that "the whole of the wilderness beyond the mountains, the whole of Kentuck would not appease her, that she would love it all and still have love to spare" (94). Her frontier is literal, her "collision with actuality" focused primarily on survival, her status as hero unquestioned.

It may thus seem an error to place this novel third, though it was published in that order. But Ellen and Theodosia live within the empirical reality of the early 1900s. Their chaos bespeaks the entropy of the myth, the ideal, and in order for them to regenerate dead rituals and re-create the world, the existence of the myth must be validated. On the other hand, before a model can act as one, the need for a model must be articulated. In other words, if Ellen, in her unselfconscious, voice-out-of-the-clod innocence, is the new Adam; if Theodosia selfconsciously seeks her Soul from amidst the decay of the Fall and establishes anew the Earth; then, Diony is the affirmation that their creation is a renaissance, that the feminine consciousness which created order out of the chaos of the Wilderness in the first place can create a new order. Leaving no doubt that Woman was primarily responsible for the creation of that first order, Miss Roberts creates Diony, a portrait of *conscious totality of being*.

Diony introduces herself in the first paragraph of her story, much as does Ellen; however, Diony is already aware of her individuality: "'I, Diony Hall,' her thought said, gathering herself close, subtracting herself from the diffused life of the house" (3). Also aware of the import of the name she bears, she is a fully formed Self whose value is not in question: "'I, Diony. I am one, myself'" (5). In addition, she is well versed in the readings of her father's favorite philosopher, George Berkeley and is, therefore, well aware of the power of the mind, made evident in the poem "Diony in Albemarle." In comparing her with Ellen, Miss Roberts pointed out that Diony is

"a creature of the mind, moving always more inwardly."\* In addition to her Selfhood and power of mind, she is "from a strong race of women" on her mother's side and has therefore "two memories. . . . from which to borrow" (118, 16). The sense of family memory thus very strong in her, Diony represents that point where all things meet in time, as well as in space, because the "tilled land and the unbroken forests touch their parts about Diony." (17) Miss Roberts alludes directly to Proust in depicting Diony's memory. Mounted on her horse in preparation for leaving Albemarle, she becomes conscious of the "tinkling of the bells," and is suddenly effused with the knowledge that she is "the daughter of many":

. . . , going back through Polly Brook through the Shenandoah Valley and the Pennsylvania clearings and roadways to England, Methodists and Quakers, small farmers and weavers, going back through Thomas Hall to tidewater farmers and owners of land. . . . These remembrances were put into her own flesh as a passion, as if she remembered all her origins, and remembered every sensation her forebears had known. . . . (139)

The "tinkling bells" evokes the *sonnette* of the garden gate at Combray, the ringing of which revived the life of Swann in Marcel's memory in *Du Côté De Chez Swann*. Here, the bells signal Diony as repository of all family memory. But most important, she is the connection between the Old World and the New and, though her father's teachings and family memory play an important part in her development, it is the nexus of Sisterhood that supports her in her vital role.



Diony shares in all the feminine rituals about the house, learning well the lessons taught by her mother, Polly, a strong, beautiful woman. The strength of the tie to her mother is emphasized by her physical resemblance, her "favorance" to Polly and the "women-folks on [her] side" (118). Diony readily accepts such likeness, not shrinking from "being as her mother," as did Rhody in "The Betrothed." In one telling scene she slips on her mother's best dress, very large on her, and, remembering how her mother looks in it, she accepts "her new self" and is "ready to run to meet all that [will] come to her. . . , no longer in awe of adult being" (61). Indeed, the girl is in awe of nothing. Another woman in the household, a servant of sorts, has been to the Wilderness and returned a frightened, mute "apparition" (99). Despite this example that Diony sees as a "relic of the wilderness," she longs to go to Kentucky, to "make a world out of chaos" (137, 24). Strong and undivided in her own being, she is influenced only by strong role models.

The two major role models in Diony's life, Polly and Elvira Jarvis--who will be her mother-in-law--emblem the two worlds, two "ways of being." Polly is feminine courage, power and creative renewal in the established world, as Elvira is in the world coming-to-be, the same qualities in each world coming together in Diony, limned in the rituals of two days of community worship:

Mistress Elvira. . . . worked outside at the spit.  
 . . . , deferring with quiet dignity to Polly Hall because Polly was the mistress of the house. . . . Diony went back and forth between. . . , went between Polly

and Elvira to fetch for both of them. (80)

It is Elvira who goes to Harrod's Fort in the Great Meadow with Diony and Berk, who moves "at once among the strong women of the fort," and beside whose "greatness" the younger woman feels "small and light" (180). Her feeling of inadequacy becomes crucial when, under attack from a band of Indian marauders, the older woman gives "her life for her," Diony (200). Elvira becomes thus a Christ figure, but a greater significance of both Sisterhood and Selfhood is implied. Shortly after the attack, word comes back from an Indian village that "two white squaws" had fought bravely, the elder one with a "strength fit to kill a buffalo," but both "squaws" mentioned in the same breath. Diony, now a "white squaw among the Long Knives," sees herself in a different light, in a "long dim vista reaching down from Ohio": "She saw a white squaw, a strong young woman with rich life in her, a faint red under her sunburnt cheeks, her linsey dress casting a dull shadow in the dim cabin" (205)

This passage may seem rather strange, but the reference to "red under her sunburnt cheeks" unquestionably ties it to the story of Rhody in "The Betrothed" and the alike-yet-different theme. Diony now links all women, past and present, red and white, in the two worlds, old and new. "Old and New" must be emphasized here, because there is never a hint of "civilized" and "uncivilized" concerning white and red races in the novel; indeed, it is the white man who corrupts the Indian (317-29). But in addition to being a link between all women, Diony, who has inherited Elvira's duties and rituals, is now an incarnation of the older woman. She has, in a sense, received Elvira's

"mantle," as Elisha received that of Elijah, and is the new prophet, or teacher, or Christ--an honor mixed with pain as announced by the "shadow." Emphasizing her willingness to endure whatever her new role is to bring, however, the "white squaw" moves into "the deeper shadows by the fireplace" (205).

The first pain the shadow of experience provokes is the knowledge that Elvira died for her. Diony being a "creature of the mind," her pain must be more psychological than physical; therefore, the memory of Elvira's sacrifice haunts and disturbs the girl, and she continues to see the dead woman walk "with the great and strong women of the fort":

Then Diony would sink into a web of pain and gratitude, and in the tangle at last some inner spark or motion would arise which wanted to be free of the web and wanted to be of some unity or account in its own right. (207)

The web as a metaphor for the senses is introduced early in the novel, woven with Diony's role as weaver, her "garment of sense," her "senses [as] a web of unknowing fibers" acting as "tentacles" that reach out from the "Source" (20, 76). Here, the web of her senses seems to restrain Diony from becoming Woman in her "own right," which may appear to contradict her strength of Selfhood.

To add to the seeming paradox, Diony is presented as more than a "creature of the mind." Often imaged before her loom, she is the "spinning spider" herself. When Jack Jarvis, Berk's brother, first comes to carry the message from the Wilderness that Berk wants her for a wife--something she has already

decided--she sits "at the loom weaving, throwing the shuttle through the web of fine linen. . . . The light from the high window [comes] in a square that [lights] the loom and her hands as they [play] swiftly over the fiber" (82). As Jack delivers the message, Diony silently weaves it "into her cloth"; then, in response to her question as to why Berk has not written his proposal in a letter to her, Jack's reply "spread[s] outward through the threads of her nerves to the last fine web of sense," and she accepts it as "spun" out of herself (89):

By the time she had passed three shuttles across the warp before her, the disclosure seemed to be an ancient story. . . , known and true to all her members, Berk being immanent, present in her own mind, as if he had not gone away. (89)

The image here of Diony at her loom, thinking of her chosen mate, recalls explicitly the image of Hiram superimposed on Patty, the "spider" in "I Love My Bonny Bride." It would seem here, however, that in spinning her own life Diony has been caught in the web of her own senses, her own feeling about Elvira, and cannot create a being in its "own right." Her dilemma arises from her confusion of Elvira as role model with the conviction that she must replace the older woman. Since Woman must create her own being and rituals in Miss Roberts' world, taking the place of another, however "Christlike" that other may seem, is not viable. Role models, as well as rituals of telling and handing-down, though imperative to the evolution of the race, are only mirrors, reflected potential, of what resides within the individual consciousness. In order for Diony to

create her own being, she must recognize the Creator within her own Self. She has not yet come to such recognition; moreover, though imbued with a "sense of herself as eternal," she has not yet embraced death and is not therefore re-created (254).

Her re-creation is effected through the act of weaving and of defining her Self against the background of others, and turns on the duality inherent in nature itself--the savage and the tame, chaos and order. Berk, driven to find and kill his mother's scalper, leaves the fort despite Diony's pleas to the contrary and has not returned after some eighteen months. Meanwhile, Evan Muir, their guide into the Great Meadow, has helped Diony with food, played with her child, and planted some flax for her. Other men have been killed, and Diony, haunted still by Elvira's death and now doubting Berk's survival, begins to question her own coming to the Wilderness as she spins the flax:

. . . she was haunted by flying strands of gray,  
clinging threads of fine gray yarn. . . , flax and  
hair. She pushed the likeness from her mind. . . ,  
but the power of the flax in its likeness to hair  
prevailed. . . , as if it would say, "See, your mis-  
hap. . . Elvira. . . she came here. . . and thus. . .  
see." (271)

One evening, deciding that Berk is indeed dead, she takes the child and goes out of the fort into the night "full of spring and death," seeking some respite in chaos itself (272).

In the night outside the fort, the community, Diony faces her true dilemma, the fact that duality exists and is essential,

that two kinds of energy interact in the world and, even though "a strong woman," no more than she could become Elvira, she cannot be "of the Boone kind" (274):

She continually remembered on her side that the whole mighty frame of the world had no being without a mind to know it, but over this lay another way of knowing, and she saw clearly how little she could comprehend of those powers on the other side, beyond the growth of the herbs and the trees, and to sense the hostility of the forest life to her life, and to feel herself as a minute point, conscious, in a world that derived its being from some other sort. The indefiniteness of the outside earth, beyond herself, became a terror. (275)

Diony, as mind, feels lost in the disorder of a Wilderness where Boone is never lost. Her night alone in the wild dramatizes her passion to apprehend the "outside earth." The next morning she still does not truly understand but has begun her "return." The conflict between chaos and order and her continued uncertainty is reflected and brought to an uneasy resolution in the new flax. Having tied the "web" onto the loom for weaving, she sees that it will not be as strong as what she would have made in Albemarle, but much stronger than the cloth of the wild nettle that they have been wearing. It is a "sister" who points out the truth to her:

"A tame thing is ever better than a wild one for strength," Molly Anne said.

"Is that a true thing?" Diony asked

. . . . She herself was of the tame kind, she reflected

(279)

Accepting the greater strength of the "tame kind," Diony is once again imaged in her web, this time as a new being:

She wondered at the pleasure the loom gave her and she saw herself as some strange woman, some other, outside her former knowledge, sitting happily in the great loom, before the web. Some other, not herself, arose from the weaving bench and went happily across the room . . . . A tall, well grown woman, beyond herself, her hair pinned up with thorns, took a drink from the gourd, waiting one moment to spy out her image in the still, clear water of the piggin before she broke the mirror by dipping into it. The face was hearty and smooth and the eyes were strange and large and clear. (287)

The fact that she deliberately breaks the "mirror," just as she deliberately went into the "shadows," reiterates the action of the girl in the poem, "The Meeting," and stresses the will as agent for renewal. Diony, as an integrated consciousness not forced to create self-worth or transmute the past, must accept her role in the creation of the New World, and in doing so measures herself against "the Boone kind." The question here is the relative necessity of the "conqueror" and the "weaver"--or the spinning spider of culture. Miss Roberts leaves no doubt that the later has the most important role. Diony's understanding of the matter is limned in her willful breaking of the "mirror" through which she had been viewing herself, a

reflection belonging to "her former knowledge" which she no longer needs

In her new role, Diony chooses to marry Evan Muir, though some do not believe Berk to be dead. As her image in the great web before the loom is a repetition of the earlier proposal scene, so is the dubious legality of the marriage. The first ceremony was questioned because the minister, a Methodist, had no credentials to perform the rites. Some had said "Without law, but no matter," while others had hailed "A new day" (136). This time, the question of legality turns on the death of Berk. In both situations, since it is Diony who chooses, it is she who regenerates the old rituals. Neither of the church nor of the land, the rituals belong to her.

When Berk returns a year or so later, Diony again takes the law into her own hands. She has been happy with Muir and has his child; therefore, the decision, left to her because of the "law of the wilderness," is a painful one (316). The resemblance to the Enoch Arden story has been remarked by most critics, but there is a great deal more here. Berk "tells" of his imprisonment among the Indians, the importance of the ritual highlighted in the note that it is "as if he had told his way back into his home again" (332). His story is certainly the deciding factor in Diony's verdict, because it provides the answer Diony has been seeking. The Indians among whom Berk has been living were starving and, though normally not cannibals, had threatened to put the white man into their pot. Berk had faced them in their lodge:

You put me in your kettle and you'll not eat one bite



of my strength. You'll eat ne'er a thing but my weak part. . . . Iffen you don't learn better ways to make strength. . . . you are all doomed and you'll all go in the kettle of some better kind. . . . When life goes outen me the strong part goes too, and I take it wherever I go when I go from here. You couldn't eat one least bite of my strong part. (331-32)

After the others, including both husbands, have left her alone, Diony contemplates Berk's extraordinary statement that his "strong part" will remain with him even after death:

Boone said that he was never lost, she reflected. Boone moved securely among the chaotic things of the woods and the rivers. Beyond her picture of Boone, unlost, moving among the trees, she saw Berk standing before the redmen far in the north in the dense power of the famine and the cold. . . . Boone, she contrived, was a messenger to the chaotic part, a herald, an envoy there, to prepare it for civil men. (338)

Diony has, then, found an answer to her question as to who is most necessary in the establishing of a New World. Boone is a part of the chaos himself, understanding a world without order, but Berk Jarvis, whom Miss Roberts described in her notes as "art," realizes that his "strong part" transcends chaos, that it cannot be consumed.\* Hence, her choice of Berk, as Simpson points out, is based on "his greater psychic strength, responding to her sense of a will that is mated to her own."<sup>1</sup>

In the reconciliation of the energies symbolized by Boone and Berk, Diony finally comprehends her role in an epiphanic

moment. As the "whole mighty frame of the world [stands] about her. . . , all the furniture of the earth and the sky," it is she who becomes "a minute point, conscious" (338). Now, it is not only the "tilled land and the unbroken forests" that "touch their parts about Diony," but heaven and earth, as well. All differentiation of wild and tame types; the Old World and the New; all of human memory; she who stayed behind and she who went into the Wilderness, Polly and Elvira; all her roles as weaver, nurturer, creator, spinning spider; "all these threads, these elements" contract to a point, "this woman, Diony."\* And now, in her "I-consciousness," she no longer needs to question.

It is almost as if Miss Roberts is speaking of quantum physics here because, in order for a force to emerge from the dimensionless state and manifest, it needs a point of departure. A point is dimensionless, consisting of only one factor, but bearing within itself the beginning of all things, like the center of a circle. Diony is that point where all knowledge and all energy come together. Early on, in recalling Berkeley's teachings, she recites, "all knowledge is of three sorts, that derived by way of the senses, that by way of the passions, and lastly. . . , 'ideas formed by help of memory and imagination'" (22). Diony has gathered in the knowledge of the senses and of the passions, weaving them into memory with imagination. Now, conscious of her "point" of omniscience, she becomes the archetype of the Creator, truly "a beginning before the beginning" in whom all knowledge is held and from whom all manifestation will emerge (213). She will live the archetype even as she creates her world and its rituals, the myth and the

Eden that lie behind Ellen and Theodosia, established in Selfhood and supported in Sisterhood.

The concept of Sisterhood in the stories of those who come along one hundred and fifty years later bears about as much resemblance to that of the Wilderness as Nellie Chesser does to Diony. The relationship between women in *The Great Meadow* radiates the same universal, mythic quality as that between women and men. Mutual love, respect, support and interdependence prevail in an atmosphere free of family definition and bequeathment, most prominently portrayed in the trinity of Polly, Elvira and Diony. Polly gives her daughter all that she has learned, not in the sense of mother to daughter, but as "a woman and a woman" (116). She then puts her into the care of Elvira without jealousy or grief, though she knows she may never see Diony again. And, of course, Elvira epitomizes the adage that "greater love hath no man" in giving her life for the younger woman. Other women, such as Molly Anne Howe and Nancy Webb, give her a "new way of thinking" of herself, as well as the seeds, clothes and food normally shared on the Frontier (63).

In her own turn, Diony's expression of Sisterhood, noted in her acceptance of "red" under her skin, is just as universal, but at first glance it may seem cold. Betty, her sister, loves her "best" and is grief stricken at Diony's departure from Albemarle (74). But Betty, looking backward, longs to go to the Tidewater country, back to the Old World, and tries to coax her sister into going with her. The Wilderness call to Diony must be heeded, however, in order for her to direct her own destiny.

It is not as though she is abandoning Betty; she simply recognizes that she and her sister are different kinds, and that her first allegiance is to her Self and the world that she will create. Her love for her sister is repeated in her concern for Betsy Dodd, a young woman at Fort Harrod, who resembles Betty. In a beautiful gesture of kinship and caring, Diony gives her the mantle she had woven for herself in Albemarle. Later, when the mantle is found with Betsy's blood on it, Diony links her gift to the girl with that of Elvira's gift to her. Sisterhood is not dependent on blood ties to family--though that be the primary manifestation--because all humans are united in blood and mind.

Such unity of Woman is exemplified in Diony, goddess of the Pioneer Myth who creates a New World out of chaos by the power of the feminine mind, standing thus as the archetype, the model, or at least as the assertion that worlds can be re-created. Her task, however, was easier than that of either Ellen or Theodosia, because the Wilderness experience of itself was heroic. History gave Diony a place to be heroic. How is such heroism exhibited in a world that has been handed down flawed and decayed; in an ambiguous world where one has claim on "none of the land and all of the land?" The frontiers confronting Ellen and Theodosia are decidedly more complex and arduous than Diony's. Miss Roberts seemed aware of this discrepancy, and also that the two more complex novels do not resolve as harmoniously as does her Frontier story. Furthermore, none of the novels wove together satisfactorily all the strands that she gathered into her work, a problem she addressed in a letter in

1930: "The constant trend of my thought is toward a synthesis of all that I do."\* Jocelle's story is that synthesis.

*He Sent Forth a Raven* (1935)

If all the threads gather into one strand in "this woman, Diony," all Miss Roberts' major conflicts and themes gather in resolution in Jocelle Drake, hero of *He Sent Forth a Raven*. Earl Rovit quite accurately termed the novel her "noblest attempt," and just as accurately notes its literary stature: "Its universal cosmic scope and its intimate grappling with the most fundamental problems which face modern man give it a depth and breadth possessed by no other contemporary novel that I know. . . . I believe that *He Sent Forth a Raven* is one of the finest achievements in modern American letters."<sup>22</sup> Other critics and reviewers disagreed with Rovit. Louis Auchincloss called it an "allegorical novel" that was "tediously worked out"<sup>23</sup>; and Grant C. Knight, though he generally liked Miss Roberts' work, found that it fell "short of the best art," because "its structure is partially concealed in a metaphysical fog, because its facade is without the firm edge of propaganda, because its heroine is shopworn."<sup>24</sup>

Miss Roberts responded that the "reviewers generally confused themselves looking into the characters to try to find the Raven. Once they got on the wrong track, there was no finding their ways back."<sup>25</sup> Professor Knight himself looked for the Raven, insisting that he had the author's approval in his interpretation of the story as an allegory of Noah (Stoner Draker) and the Flood (World War I), with Jocelle as the Raven.<sup>26</sup> It is doubtful that Miss Roberts "approved" of that interpretation as the complete and single possibility,

especially so since she herself referred to the "Raven-ness" in Stoner Drake.<sup>47</sup> It is more likely that she simply did not feel like explaining the novel to someone who viewed its structure as "partially concealed in a metaphysical fog" because, of all the novels, this one best fuses the structure with the story with the conceits. All forms a totality; the story--one with myth, time, space and vision--is the structure as the structure is the story. Like Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," artist and creative process fuse into a work that transcends both. Indeed, Miss Roberts' term "synthesis" was prophetic, realized in this story of Jocelle.

The book opens in 1901 with a strong voice, that of Stoner Drake, making a vow that if his second wife dies, he will "never set his foot on God's earth again" (3). With that vow, Stoner pits himself against destiny and becomes the emblem of mortal man. Joan does die, and Stoner keeps his vow. The house at Wolflick Farm becomes his Ark, and the rolling Kentucky hills his sea. Those who surround him are his daughter Martha, the servants and the farmhands. His nephew, Walter, and grandchildren J. T. and Jocelle visit from time to time. The story unfolds against the background of World War I and the ideologies fragmenting society at that time: Collectivism, Christianity, isolationism, progressivism, and all sorts of other "isms."

Early in the story, Jocelle, whose father is dead, is sent by her mother, Catharine, to live with her grandfather and Aunt Martha. Jocelle never sees her mother again and adapts to life at the farm, acting as "runner" between her grandfather and the "life of the farm." Others are added to the community: Dickon,

who has been hired to build a "bridge" from which Stoner can oversee all; Briggs, a lay preacher; and John Logan Treer, an agricultural agent sent to assist farmers in the building up of the land and livestock. Each of these represent an ideology, as do Walter, J. T. and Martha.

Martha, whose nickname is Curfew because she covers the fire every night, is a brilliant, well-educated woman. But when she falls in love and brings her beloved home, Stoner orders him away and calls Martha a harlot. She almost dies from the sorrow of the experience and never again attempts to seek another love. Aside from this one weakness, she is a strong model for the young Jocelle whom she loves dearly. Jocelle goes to "seminary" where, in e. e. cummings' "bettyandisbel" fashion, she sees herself "as reflected and reflecting endlessly" (65). After her schooling, she acts as "messenger," letter-writer, memory, dictionary and decision-maker to her grandfather. And she falls in love with John Logan Treer. Dickon and Briggs both try to win her, and her cousin Walter, home for three days before going into battle, rapes her, a horrible experience that precipitates her moment of death and rebirth. Walter is killed overseas, and Dickon and Briggs are finally put out. Martha passes the torch of courage to Jocelle, who marries her choice of husbands despite Stoner's dictum to the contrary. That old man becomes senile, and the end of the story finds Jocelle, assisted by her husband, running the farm after giving part of it to J. T.

The warp of the story, then, is kept simple in order to accommodate the complex structure and the imbrices of myth. The



structure of the novel is that of a fugue within a fugue within a fugue; the "arguments" held within the single consciousness of Jocelle are played against the local "arguments" of Wolflick which are played against the global "arguments" of the war. Significantly, though musical terms are used to describe most sounds and though music plays a major role in the life-style of Wolflick, Mozart is mentioned many times but Bach only once--during the stay of Martha's lover, Wayne. All are seated about the hearth and Stoner cruelly embarrasses the intellectual Wayne by posing a ridiculous question about the makeup and origin of a comet. Any answer would be pure speculation and Wayne, only an amateur astronomer, declares himself so, to which Stoner replies "Enlightenment is what we want here" (79). To interrupt her father's cruel game, Martha announces she will play, and Jocelle requests, "Play Bach." Martha replies, "Enlightenment enough, Bach," reminding that the arts were as much a part of the Age of Enlightenment as was scientific inquiry (80). That phrase might also be taken as a prophetic response to Professor Knight and the reviewers, but it masterfully "enlightens" the novel's fugal framework, as the single reference to Bach is highlighted by the plethora of musical terms, that in itself a fugue.

Fugal characteristics of point-counterpoint are reinforced by references to "two's" and "three's" which eventually become one, resolving the "argument." At the beginning, "voices" are introduced singly in sections with headings--"Stoner Drake," "Martha," "Wolflick," "The House"--then others are added one at a time--Dickon, Briggs, Walter, J. T. and Treer. Each of the

voices states a thesis and the crescendo often peaks in a cacaphonic dialogue about the nature of man and the socioeconomic situation:

They were all talking, speech upon speech. Martha defended Detroit for a moment and said that she wished she had a filly out of one of the high-class stables.

"What are we talken about?" J. T. cried out.

"About enough. . . and a-plenty. Before another decade we'll have a new man," Logan answered him.

"It takes a war to get a living for the peasant."

"Sixty-six to sixteen. Fifty years of Lincolnmania. The worship of the cabin-man. The cult of Jesus grew parallel with the growth of empire. . . ."

"I don't like your talk. . . , Cult of Jesus."  
. . . . It's God's own truth. You can't deny the shrines, temples, banks, cars, townhalls. . . ."

"It's the tendency to centralize. The mind loves a unit. . . .Wants to bring everything to focus. . . . Thinks everything outside is subject to focus. Begs focus. Borrow focus. Gets focused."

"While everybody looks at the pigeon fly out of the hat."

"Exactly."

"Under cover of the popular religion the Barons of the Big Fortunes grew. Learned how to sell things to the government. How t', how t', how t'."

"Builds another Lincoln gee-gaw."

"Lost the man under the myth."

"Sop to the common dog-man."

"Cult of the log cabin. . . ."

"Every man born west of the Appalachians in 1809 was born in a cabin. . . ."

"The barons loved the cabin-man. Sold him goods, transportation, oil. Taught him how to sing 'Yankee Doodle' too. And got his vote. Rolled around old cabins on wheels in election campaigns."

Walter began to sing to break the swift dialogue.

(124-25)

Such beautifully crafted dialogues don't serve to advance the story but, in true fugal fashion, simply advance arguments. What is interesting in this scene, and all the "forte" scenes is that it would be impossible to write them without an accurate and detailed knowledge of the social stratification, the economic circumstances and the political situation of a precise historical and geographical moment in history--the South at the time of World War I. At no other time and in no other place in American history has that exact mix of ingredients been a part of the Southern cauldron. Even the mounting hysteria threatening to unseal the lids of "manners" is no ordinary hysteria. It does not rise out of inelegant or sordid personalities, but out of the phenomenon of the coalescence of a chain of events that began with the Civil War and the Industrial Revolution and has culminated in dashed dreams and the death of an era. These dramatic personae have not been cast in a drama to disseminate the author's "message," but in an attempt to find

some order in an historical maelstrom in a manner as real and as detailed as the characters of Stendhal or Tolstoy.

The four major voices are those of Stoner Drake, Dicko Briggs and Treer, introduced in that order. Stoner's is the voice of the Patriarch. He is the keeper of the bridge and the clock, the giver of life, law and order, wielder of absolute power, all emblemed as a phallus centered in a vortex:

Around him lay the farm, wound in enormous circles by the surrounding hills and the focus of life that gathered to the barns and breeding pens and drew them more inwardly toward the house, the man there, the step on the stair, the sounding horn at his tight lips, the pointing finger protruding from a strong fist. (47)

Rovit sees Stoner as the "energizing flame," but his vow taken on death, the death of his wife, and he repeats that vow after he learns of Jocelle's violation.<sup>20</sup> He is the "lone will, the wish, the desire" fixated in a rolling sea, hardened as the worn-out earth, no longer a creative energy (253). He insists on the phallus, the thrust, in a land where conquest is no longer viable, and has isolated himself because he can no longer control. The "lonely will" is ego-centered, centripetal force, and can no longer create because it is compacted in stone. Growth is no longer possible for Stoner, imaged in his senility at the end of the story, as well as in his name.

Stoner Drake is a rearrangement of "drakestone," a common game in rural Kentucky (at least in years past). Somewhat like "horse shoes," the game is played with smooth, elliptic stones. The "drakestone" being the largest, it is placed on

boulder or a large stump, and the object is to dislodge the "drakestone" by skipping the smaller stones at it. Thus, all of the voices, the arguments, are attempts to dislodge the Patriarch, Stoner Drake.

Dickon's voice is that of reason, of scientific inquiry, about which he has written a book, *"The Cosmograph,"* including everything--*"the origins of matter, of the nature of life, of the origin of Man, of Order, Figurability, Succession, Retention, of the nature of the stars"* (101). He sees the universe as a great engine, and "Man, the upstart, the prig of the universe," who repeatedly "tumbles headlong back into Chaos" (102). Reason pushed to its extreme, he demonstrates the vacuousness and vanity of pure intellectualism.

Preacher Jack Briggs, on the other hand, is purely physical; he exudes "the faint odor of some beast," and eats as "a great animal might bend to a feeding trough." Shoes being painful, he prefers to go barefoot even in winter, and sensuality suffuses his flesh which is "red and full of life" (91-4). His prayers are "oracles" and his one oft-repeated sermon an oration reminiscent of the repetitious exhortations in the Book of Amos. Briggs is Christian orthodoxy compressed to the physical, earthy simplicity of "blind faith," poetic and lively but embodied in the "beast," thus inadequate to lift man out of his self-imposed alienation.

Answering these two arguments is the voice of John Logan Treer, who sees history as collaborative and dreams of a world of "shared experience":

Language itself depends upon a sharing of many men.

No man ever made speech. The mind depends upon language, words, arranged images that have been named by other men, all men. . . . Man is a collective creature, a focus where many men, dead or living, come together. (148)

Treer, a unifying of both the animalistic and the intellectual, is an evolved combination of Jasper Kent and Berk Jarvis, and is driven to action as was Berk, but not on a personal level. Martha sees Treer as the "large black weasel. . . , vanquished animal life brought back to the little jungle of the farm. . . , trying to bring its two unfocused eyes to a unified vision" (151). Jocelle dismisses her aunt's view, thinking of Treer as "Chiron, the good centaur" (134). Mythologically, Chiron was the grandson of Uranus and offspring of Kronos, thus half-god and priest-king of the centaurs. A teacher, he taught the arts of warriorship, hunting, philosophy, music, religion and, notably, prophecy and healing, his most famous student being Asclepias, renowned doctor and son of Apollo. Chiron also gave up his immortality so that Prometheus might keep his. Most important here, however, are his teaching skills in a combination of physical, intellectual and transcendental fields, which in Treer reconciles the duality of physical desire and spiritual aspiration, making him a fit mate for a descendant of Dionysus. His vision of a "New Man" also recalls Dionysus's "new race of giants," and emphasizes renewal. But however deeply he impresses Jocelle with his message, he cannot move Stoner Drake.

The debates of the three men--at times punctuated by remarks from J. F. about horse sense, and Walter, who thinks

that "Thought is a fool" (160)--swirl about Stoner and swell to a great crisis when Treer advances his "collective man" theory:

He spoke against Drake's mounting hostility. . . . ,  
speaking louder. . . . Drake's lifted hand did not  
stop the flow of argument, his upward pointing index  
finger, his sunburned crumpled hand. . . .

"You can't talk to me." A long blast on the horn  
. . . . Three orders were given and a report stated.  
"Away with y'," and the man was gone, Drake then leav-  
ing the theory of man and the theorists, to stalk  
through his upper hall and over the bridge to his seat  
in the sun where he called orders. . . . (149)

Thus, the Patriarch remains in control, his "seat in the sun" safe from the theorists, because it takes more than theorists to dislodge a system; it takes a regeneration within the system itself, a new surge of creative power issuing, in this instance, from Woman.

Early on, Jocelle is announced as the "annointed." Named by her grandfather for his mother, her name is a fusion of Josephine Ellen (10). The Joseph of the Old Testament, whose name means "increaser," was the Patriarch responsible for saving his father and brothers from starvation, thus establishing the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, Jocelle combines the "saviour" image of ancient Patriarchy and Miss Roberts' "new Adam," Ellen Chesser, as well as the past with the present. She also retains a sense of Ellen's dream of a "fairer land" and the mythical city of Mome. Telling her grandfather about her geography book, she reveals that she has "made up a place" with

a "tower and a palace" and houses "made out of fine marble." As Stoner joins in the fantasy, Jocelle becomes caught up, "saying more than she [knows], words coming to her lips beyond memory. 'Because God is there'" (24-5). The child is then the repository of the memory of the ideal, the Garden. Indeed, Jocelle is the culmination of the best of all Miss Roberts' heroes. She even brings a dead lamb back to life, as did Patty and Sabina in the story "Holy Morning," thus sharing their nobility.

Despite all these attributes, however, Jocelle is not as dramatic a hero as are Ellen, Theodosia and Diony, primarily because she shares the limelight with the historical moment as the others did not. Paradoxically, this strengthens, indeed is necessary to, her believability. Jocelle is less selfconscious than all the other heroes and, though she has a strong sense of "Amness," she has no notion of creating a "race of heroes." Her strength is quietly, unselfconsciously held within, revealed in one brief phrase at the close of the description of her grandfather as a pointing index finger central to life: "She slipped out of the vortex on nimble feet" (47).

Jocelle, like Ellen, does not seek life experience; however, when it comes to her, she actively and consciously deals with it and intellectually reaffirms her changed Being. She is, for example, devastated when Walter rapes her. Fearful that she is pregnant, she has a horror of giving "birth to some further monstrosity of war," of war tearing a "Gargantuan, incestuous birth through her breast." Jocelle has symbolically taken on the sins of the war, "endless successions of war



doubled upon war to make a child in the likeness of the father" (167).

In her semi-delirium, she feels herself divided into three; the Jocelle of the past, the violated one of the present, and another that arises "from moment to moment, stepping through the confusion in strong rhythmic stride, asserting itself, unafraid and unashamed, saying nothing but biding her time." This third assures her that there "will be a new earth, like the old in outline" (164). It is this third Jocelle that burns the garments she was wearing at the time she was ravaged and vows that no one will touch her again except her lover, Logan Treer. Jocelle has not then had to come to terms with her own sexuality in the sense that Theodosia and Ellen did, but with the brute sexuality of the world. And in doing so, she has integrated the trinity of the past, present and future. Some time later, when her grandfather learns of the crime, he restates his oath, much to Jocelle's horror, but also ceremonially reinforces the trinity image in a gift of a lantern made by an ancestor and used in Fort Harrod, the first fort in the Wilderness--a lantern with sockets for three candles.

By the next summer, Jocelle has become Woman, and it is Martha who announces the transformation in a gentle, loving scene of sharing. She first tells the younger woman that she looks like a milkmaid with "apples in [her] cheeks." When Jocelle responds that she has just eaten an apple on the stair, Martha continues:

A deep-breasted, deep-hearted woman, Jocelle Drake,

luno when she stands against the mantle. . . . Aphro-

dite when she comes this way. . . . The daughter of Dione, was it. . . ? and, say Zeus. . . . Ate the apple on the stairs. . . . Instead of throwing it, or who threw it, anyway, or did Paris. . . ? and she ate it on the staircase. Saved a lot of trouble. Simply ate it and had done with it. (194)

Here, Jocelle reflects not only her sisters, Diony and Theodosia, but also Helen and, interestingly, Eve; an Eve who can eat the apple and not precipitate a Fall or Original Sin. This Eve glories in Nature and in her own nature, all of it. This passage bluntly dispenses with any need for reconciliation with any but the facets of one's own nature. Jocelle also brings together the natures of the two women in her life, her mother and her aunt.

Catharine, "a restlessness bogged in passion and clothed richly," going off with a man with whom she has been having an affair, is so controlled by her physical desire she abandons her daughter and, thus, her past and future (42); Martha, on the other hand, is so enamoured of the intellect that she chooses a man who "care(s) more to know a thing than to have it," and who can intellectualize the destruction of a love relationship to the extent that in the moment of its ending it is "ten years afterward" (76, 84). And Martha also bends to the will of the Patriarch. She is the caretaker, the Curfew, which implies closure. She marks the end of an era as surely as does Stoner. Jocelle must, then, as had her foremother Diony, unite physical desire with intellectual choice, and she carries on an "argument

to end all arguments" with herself against the backdrop of the armistice (216).

She realizes that she has done the choosing, Treer being "passive in love" (216). However, she doesn't feel as if she knows him. After "looking for his mind," she tries to picture him physically, but cannot form a "clearly remembered picture or a sum of remembered details." What she recalls is an essence, an "indefinite sweetness" or a "sudden step." Most significantly, her recollection of him does not "disturb the sum of his being as it accompanie[s] her own identity" (217). In other words, Treer is as integrated as Jocelle. She does not take him into her but neither does he dominate. Nor do they "become one" in the Biblical sense. They have transcended the problems Jung identified in his "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship." They also symbolize the armistice and the promise of a new world built on sharing equally, resolving the "argument of arguments," that of the domination of one sex by the other, a domination based on unintegrated sexuality.

Jocelle emblems the resolution of that argument in historical terms also. Indeed, it is in that role that she is a true hero, because neither being able to slip out of the "vortex," nor transcending her personal guilt about the war (provoked by Walter's violence), nor integrating man's dual nature qualifies her for heroism in the structure of this book. She must resolve not only the arguments raised by these issues but also those posed by the crucial historical moment in which she participates. And she must establish a new system out of

the Patriarchal one that she has been handed. To that end, she is undoubtedly the raven:

She would lift in mind through the air to hover at each man's shoulder when he spoke, a bird of strong wings and sharp beak, black and invisible, going to and fro above their heads. . . , never at rest, a flutter of ruffled feathers with their querulous words, a croaking cry with their protests, a pulsing of quiet wings when they brooded. . . . (52)

This passage coupled with Stoner's "bridge" tempts one to simply declare this an "allegorical" novel and look no further. However, as already noted, Miss Roberts' work is never that obvious.

Noah did send forth a raven, true, and Jocelle goes to and fro--from one argument to another as well as from her grandfather to the life of the farm. This raven is associated with truth, coming in a vision to Jocelle in her thirteenth year, "a will and a desire upwelling within her to have the truth plainly in her hands and to move among things that were plainly reported" (56). But two other ravens from mythology were also sent out every day. They were thought and memory, the two ravens that perched on Odin's shoulders and reported all that they saw and heard. And Jocelle is thought as well as memory: Stoner is constantly asking her what she thinks, "what's to be made of this--here thing-ma-gig," or telling her to "find out what this war is" (93,98). Hence, the trinity of ravens, truth, memory and thought--or the ideal, history and the ordering principle of the feminine mind--come together in Jocelle, who is

an observer. She hears all, sees all--but she is the only one presented without a voice. She is not yet a participant, neither in the arguments nor in history, and she alone can make the decision to become a part. If Jocelle is to re-create herself and a new system, she must make her own voice heard. It is the *via negativa*, the realization that she is a non-participant, that provokes her to speak.

It disturbs her that the others "share something," that she is "put apart. . . , aside from their discussions." And resolving to "be equal with them or better in knowing," she one day interjects a sudden question into the debate:

"What is the best part of a man?"

"Best according to what?"

"The best, the most lasty. What is it?"

They looked at the ground, asking themselves, each in his own way. . . . "Why would there be any best?"

[Walter] asked. J. T. spoke almost at once: "The soul, I reckon, whatever it is." In the quiet that followed this speech, Logan and Walter looked at her with amiable surprise. Then Logan began to talk around her inquiry. . . .

"The all, all-which and all-what, together everything and whatever, all the functions in one. Finally it would be the we-ness of the race." (130-31)

The "we-ness of the race" is that which perpetuates the race and permits it to re-create itself; and it is Jocelle who has found the crucial issue. This scene, marking the middle of the book, ritualistically strikes a major chord with a question central to

all the debates--and going to the heart of the matter--denoting the new voice, the questioning voice of Jocelle, as the one that will state the resolution at the end of the novel.

The final argument takes place at Logan Treer's return. He has been away to help in the war and is now coming back to marry Jocelle who, inheriting the fire-tending from Martha, has laid a fire in an unused bedroom, which Stoner has noticed. Finding out who is coming, he says he will allow Treer one hour. Lifting the pointing index finger, he orders Jocelle to "'Mark well the timepiece'" (223). Then, voices are added in a marvelous cacaphony, all running over and about each other: Dickon proclaims "'Chaos produced Earth, Love, Erebus, Night, and the Universe'"; filling gaps in Briggs' sermon, "'Genesis means how it began. . . .'" ; while Stoner blows a loud blast on the horn and repeats, "'One hour he can stay. You hear me?'" And from abovestairs, Martha keeps calling, "'Don't let anybody tell you, Jocelle. . . . If he can't come to where you are, you blow hell straight through Chaos. God! Jocelle, don't let anybody tell you. . . .'" (222-24):

The voices were rough in argument and long-sounding in loud dispute and speculation. Voices flowed through the house. . . . Each argument was heightened by the coming lover, each man striving to state himself anew. (224)

It is almost as if the voices are struggling for their very lives, not just recognition. Threatened by a new order, they echo the voices of war, each resisting change, holding out for domination, not resolution

The resolution comes after the marriage of Jocelle and Treer, the rites performed in the bedroom of Martha who is at last making her stand against the Patriarch in a loving ritual of Sisterhood. The resolution comes in the birth of a baby girl and Jocelle's creation of life out of death. It also comes in her recognition of the "clear design," that which determines the "most lasty part of a man":

She had drawn life out of Wolflick where a lonely tomb closed over, had closed over Drake years ago. She had been somehow essential to his life and his days. . . . And thus, a clear design, the mind, common to all men, it pointed an index, to a communal sharing which was religious, the sharing of the common mental pattern where individual traits merged.

In it somewhere or somehow came the Redeemer. (252-53)

Significantly, the new baby is named Roxanna, meaning "dawn of day." Jocelle, the "Redeemer," has given birth to a new day.

This synthesis, Jocelle's story, succeeds in tying together most of Miss Roberts' themes and concepts. One of the most successful facets is that of the fugal structure. "Structure" is a problematic term here, as is "resolution," because both imply closure and fixity, neither of which exist in Miss Roberts' work. But, for want of a better term, the fugal "structure" in this novel embodies the earlier images of the spider, the web, the tentacles, and even the onion. Here, all the earlier images coalesce into a dynamic, volatile, pattern that reflects all of them, but raises them to more than motifs.

Here, they fuse with the movement, story line, history, and vision, all resolving into a new creation that points back to the Wilderness paradise and forward to a "new dawn."

Phallic power had been needed to thrust into the Wilderness, but that power, used to seize life and fix it rather than flow with it, stood opposed to change and closed to new experience, hardened, though it had created that life in the first place. Stoner Drake, then, marks the end of the Frontier, as well as the end of the Patriarchal system. Jocelle and her baby girl promise a New World, established on the feminine principles of integration and renewal.



## CONCLUSION

Our text books should be rewritten, to foster the true myths and symbols. My own region is rich. We sprang from a race of giants.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

This ringing declaration of Promethean lineage, penned in response to Allen Tate's *I'll Take My Stand*, establishes Miss Roberts' deep concern for reconnecting with the myth that was the Great Meadow of Kentucky. It also reveals the anguish of an artist who had experienced the death of that myth. Born in 1881, she lived through the horrors of Reconstruction and the decadence of the Frontier legends. She was witness to the exploitation of the "cabin-man," to the ignominy suffered by Southerners in the grip of Progressivism, to her beloved country "laid waste by thrift and commerce," her indignation deeply held:

As a child I refused to sing "Marching Through Georgia" and the so-called "Battle Hymn of the Republic";  
I have sat in my high school, refusing to stand, while  
these songs went forward, burning within, all one  
little frail blonde rage.\*

In one note, she calls on fellow Kentuckians to "resist the Middle West. . . , remember your past, your fine names, place words. . . ." Such pride of place may well be called obsessive, if one forgets that her exhortations called for racial memories

to thread all the way back through Virginia to the Old World, to "Dierdre or Conchubor" and, one might imagine, to Eden.\*

Impossible, then, as it is to divorce Miss Roberts' concerns from her origins--a characteristic shared by most Kentuckians, as Professor Knight lamented--her vision is not necessarily limited to her region. Her intent seems to be to inspire all to reach for their own nobility, to transcend their limitations imposed by the "wasteland" image of the modern world that plagued most of the writers of her era:

People generally have a vague idea of their origins . . . . We . . . hold fine myths of ourselves, as if we were descended from an old race of immortals or came out of some place of fabulous well-being. . . . "From old Virginia" is the voice less of the flesh and more of the spirit, as if old customs and settled ideas of life would speak out of the mouths of wanderers, the *dominant race speaking above the actual flesh-ly man* (italics added).\*

Miss Roberts' abiding belief in the transcendent nature of man would not let her simply delineate the entropy and malaise that gripped the literature she was constrained to delineate the possibilities, as well. Thus, it is her "dominant race," her concept of a common spirit of man--the "we-ness of the race," the "most lasting part of a man"--that informs her passion for the re-creation of the myth, not only her origins.

The clear design for re-creating the myth is held, of course in the human mind, itself a sort of Universal Mind held in common or, as Jung expressed it, a "world soul," a "natural

force which is responsible for all the phenomena of life and the psyche." According to Berkeley, that force is an *"omnipresent eternal mind."* Both of these definitions accord with the story lines of all Miss Roberts' novels and short stories, but rebirth of the myth demands the rebirth of the hero, a painful process. Through their "collisions with actuality" her heroes must choose to go through the painful process of individuation--or they might refuse to do so and thus fixate--which leads them to the recognition of death in themselves before they can reconnect with their own creative centers.

The recognition that death as well as life is held in the being, in the soul, is Miss Roberts' method of denying the concept of Original Sin, for though her heroes participate in the death of the ideal and are created out of the "lonely will" of the phallus, it must be remembered that "decay is change, not evil." In other words, the "decay" is the death, or the dragon, which must be faced because, though the mind is held in common, it is the individual who must "divide hate from love where the two are interlocked in one emotion" and "will to love God the Creator" (Raven 253). And "God the Creator" is that "bare breath" that dares to will to live, as Theodosia Bell discovers. This is the only possibility for overcoming the state of the "lonely will" and bringing the consciousness back into a state of "we-ness"; the individual stops thinking about herself and instead becomes her Self, recognizes her Self. In this sense, she accepts that her own Self has created her, is constantly re-creating her, and that her own Self is, then, the Creator--which

Ellen intuitively and Diony, Theodosia and Jocelle consciously accept.

All of the heroes of the novels, and many of those in the short stories are, of course, well advanced in the use of the Word. It is obvious that Miss Roberts believed that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God," as did the writer of *First John*. But it is also obvious that she was committed to the "categorical aesthetic," a commitment avowed by the young Elizabeth--"I am a poet"--and never forgotten. Her "Word" is thus her art, her act of affirming her own "coming-to-be." This profound sense of herself as artist, as orderer, through the Word, aligns her incontrovertibly with Percy Shelley. Her only direct citation of Shelley is in *My Heart and My Flesh*, but a major point in *Prometheus Unbound* is of man as "one harmonious soul of many a soul, / Whose nature is its own divine control."<sup>3</sup> Miss Roberts would also agree with Shelley that "speech created thought, / Which is the measure of the universe."<sup>4</sup>

It is Shelley's *A Defense of Poetry*, however, that reveals the convergence in views of the poet's role--as well as several other views. First of all, Shelley reiterates Berkeley's view that "All things exist as they are perceived; at least in relation to the percipient."<sup>5</sup> And though the Romanticist contradicts himself many times in the essay, Miss Roberts must have thrilled at his discussion of the decay of myth and the paradoxical nature of being. But there is one section that she herself might have written:

(Poetry) equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to

which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true words of Tasso: "*Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il poeta*."

That last line recalls Miss Roberts' note that "only poets go to Heaven"\*; the entire passage, however, could be a manifesto for what she accomplishes in her oeuvre, and what her heroes accomplish with their lives.

All of her heroes are presented in "stages of "creating beings within their beings," and those who are wholly integrated have succeeded. They are all artists, poets, created by their creator who is simultaneously "creating anew her universe." In this way they "enlarge the capacity for experience and re-value the human race," each in her own way offering a renaissance.\* Ellen Chesser offers thought, will, and the "honey of life,"; Theodosia offers freedom from the Fall, Original Sin and inertia; Diony offers the Word, order, and the remembrance of paradise; Lucelle offers the ordering voice, giving resolution and the promise of the "dawn of day"; all of them offer the feminine mind, a new "race of spiders," all copies of themselves.

Living in a "fallen" mythopoeic world of inertia and decay, Elizabeth Madox Roberts remythifies that world on the feminine principle of creating life out of death, new birth springing from the seed power inherent in death. Such movement precludes the haunting sense of cosmic isolation that hovers about the works of many of her contemporaries, such as Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Her heroes are much more reminiscent of those of Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, though one is not tempted to speak of an "epiphany" leading to a stated future purpose in any of Miss Roberts' works except *He Sent Forth a Raven*.

Like a woven tapestry, there is in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' oeuvre a delicate gathering together of the strands of life experiences--be they physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual--and weaving them into a pattern. No grand finales close the novels, only a subtle folding and the promise that the Self the hero has created will go on re-creating ever anew her Self and her universe, a re-creation Miss Roberts would name heroic. And she would agree with Jung that the future of the world depends on such heroism:

I am neither spurred on by excessive optimism nor in love with high ideals, but am merely concerned with the fate of the individual human being--that infinitesimal unit on whom a world depends, and in whom, if we read the meaning of the Christian message aright, even God seeks his goal.

C. G. Jung  
*The Undiscovered Self*

## NOTES

## Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Stewart Roberts, "Memorial Address," *Supplement to Kentucky Medical Journal* 30 May 1935: 11.

<sup>2</sup> John Wilson Townsend, *Kentuckians in History and Literature* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1907) 30.

<sup>3</sup> Basil Richardson, "Heroic Women of the Wilderness," *Supplement to Kentucky Medical Journal* 30 May 1935: 27.

<sup>4</sup> Kent Ladd Steckmesser, *The Western Hero in History and Legend* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965) 3-10.

<sup>5</sup> A. B. Guthrie, Jr., "The Historical Novel," *Western Writing*, ed. Gerald W. Haslam (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974) 54.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Deane Irvin, *Women in Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979) 1.

<sup>7</sup> Irvin 67-104.

<sup>8</sup> Irvin 104-30.

<sup>9</sup> Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Woman and the Frontier Experience* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) 88.

<sup>10</sup> Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1981) 6.

<sup>11</sup> Morton Bush, *Travels* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971) 120-65.

<sup>12</sup> Appleton's *Illustrated Handbook of American Travel* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1857) 317.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas J. Karolides, *The Pioneer in the American Novel 1900-1950* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 23-30.

<sup>14</sup> J. Donald Adams, *The Shape of Books to Come* (New York: Viking Press, 1934) 117-27.

<sup>15</sup> Karolides 96-8.

<sup>16</sup> Myres 98.

<sup>17</sup> William H. Slavick, introduction, *The Time of Man*, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982) xv

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Meade, "Cultural Bases for Understanding Literature," General Meeting of Modern Language Association, Boston, 28 Dec. 1952.

## Chapter One

### A Little Closer to the Edge of Things

<sup>1</sup> Glenway Wescott, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts: a Personal Note," *The Bookman* March 1932: 13.

<sup>2</sup> Harry Modean Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: American Novelist* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956) 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> Campbell and Foster 3.

<sup>4</sup> Grant C. Knight, "Bluegrass and Laurel," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 28:1 (6 Jan. 1945): 13.

<sup>5</sup> J. Donald Adams, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* XII (Jan.-Oct. 1936): 85.



<sup>6</sup> Robert Penn Warren, "Life Is from Within," *the Saturday review of Literature* 2 March 1963: 20.

<sup>7</sup> William H. Slavick, introduction, *The Time of Man*, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982) vii.

<sup>8</sup> W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941) viii.

<sup>9</sup> Cited from the personal papers of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, held in the Library of Congress, the Filson Club Archives and the Appalachian Archives at the University of Kentucky, presently being edited by William H. Slavick. Hereafter, all such citations will be noted with an \* immediately following the citation.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick P. W. McDowell, *Elizabeth Madox Roberts* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963) 159-60.

<sup>11</sup> Flannery O'Connor, cited in "Christ, Satan and Southern Protestantism" by Nadine Brewer, *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* Fall 1985: 103

<sup>12</sup> Warren 38

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *He Sent Forth a Raven* (New York: The Viking Press, 1935) 143. Hereafter, this source will be cited in parentheses following the quotation as *Raven*.

<sup>14</sup> George Berkeley, *Principles, Dialogues, and Philosophical Correspondence*, ed. Colin Murray Turbayne (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963) 23.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *Jingling in the Wind* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1938) 256. Hereafter, this source will be cited in parentheses following the quotation as *Jingling*.

<sup>16</sup> Earl H. Rovit, *Herald to Chaos: The Novels of Elizabeth Madox Roberts* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1960) 7.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *The Time of Man* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982) 237. Hereafter, this source will be cited in parentheses following the quotation as *Time*.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) 114.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *The Great Meadow* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1930) 93-4. Hereafter, this source will be cited in parentheses following the quotation as *Meadow*.

## Chapter Two

### Sown Thus as Wildings

<sup>1</sup> Rena Niles, "Kentucky Profiles: She Writes the Way She Weaves," *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, 8 Jan. 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander M. Buchan, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts," *The Southwest Review* XXV (1940): 468.

McDowell 31.

<sup>3</sup> Rovit 156-57.

Emily Dickinson, *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, selected by Helen Plotz (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964) 22.

<sup>4</sup> Niles.

<sup>5</sup> T. S. Eliot, "Choruses From 'The Rock' VII," *Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964) 119.

<sup>6</sup> Berkeley 11-12.

Berkeley 18.

<sup>10</sup> Beatrice Bruteau, *The Psychic Grid* (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979) 86.

<sup>11</sup> Warren 38.

<sup>12</sup> J. Donald Adams, *The Shape of Books to Come* (New York: Viking Press, 1934) 127.

<sup>13</sup> Dickinson 118.

<sup>14</sup> e.e. cummings, "in Just-," *100 Selected Poems* (New York: Grove Press, 1954) 5.

<sup>15</sup> Niles

<sup>16</sup> Niles

<sup>17</sup> Rovit 7.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *A Buried Treasure* (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1931) 68. Hereafter, this source will be cited in parentheses following the quotation as *Treasure*.

<sup>19</sup> Rovit 7.

<sup>20</sup> C. G. Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung*, ed. Violet Staub DeLaszlo (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959) 78. All subsequent quotations from Jung will be from this edition and will be cited by article and page.

<sup>21</sup> Dickinson 112-13.

William Wordsworth "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey." *Major British Poets of the Romantic Period*, ed. William Heath (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1973) 203

### Chapter Three

#### Enlarging the Capacity for Experience

<sup>1</sup> J. Donald Adams, "A Master of the Short Story," *New York Times Book Review* 20 Nov. 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Auchincloss, *Pioneers and Caretakers: A Study of Nine American Women Novelists* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965) 135.

<sup>3</sup> Adams, book review.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, "Sacrifice of the Maidens," *The Haunted Mirror* (New York: Viking Press, 1933) 30. Hereafter, works from this source will be cited in parentheses by page number following the quotation.

<sup>5</sup> Niles

<sup>6</sup> Campbell and Foster 238.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Madox Roberts *Not by Strange Gods* (New York: Viking Press, 1941) 226. Hereafter, works will be cited in parentheses by page number following the quotation.

<sup>8</sup> McDowell 34.

<sup>9</sup> Hazard Adams, introduction to "Giambattista Vico," ed. Hazard Adams, *Critical Theory Since Plato* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971) 293.

<sup>10</sup> Warren 21.

<sup>11</sup> James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York: Macmillan, Inc., 1986) 96.

<sup>12</sup> Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," 105

<sup>10</sup> William Blake, *The Book of Thel*, Heath 25.

<sup>11</sup> Blake 24.

<sup>12</sup> Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," 158.

<sup>13</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953) 484.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis P. Simpson, cited by William H. Slavick in introduction to *Time of Man* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982) xxvii.

<sup>15</sup> Harriette Arnow, interview with Evelyn Stuart, *Detroit Free Press*, cited by Wilton Eckley in *Harriette Arnow* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974) 124.

<sup>16</sup> John Ewing, Kentucky County Agriculture Extension Agent, personal interview, 14 July 1980.

<sup>17</sup> Bruteau 84.

<sup>18</sup> Campbell and Foster 241.

<sup>19</sup> J. Donald Adams, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts," 86.

<sup>20</sup> C. B., book review, *The Louisville Times* 17 Dec. 1932.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Spender, *T. S. Eliot* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976.) 3.

<sup>22</sup> T. S. Eliot, "The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *T. S. Eliot: Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1936) 13.

<sup>23</sup> William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Heath 35.

<sup>24</sup> T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1934) 61.

<sup>25</sup> Eliot 55.

- 29 Eliot, "Ash Wednesday III," *Selected Poems* 87.
- 30 Spender 134.
- 31 Berkeley 96
- 32 Berkeley 73.
- 33 Berkeley 82-3.
- 34 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1967) 59.
- 35 Jung, "Psychological Types" 199.
- 36 Jung, "Symbols of Transformation" 19.
- 37 Rousseau 46.
- 38 Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype" 347.
- 39 Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche" 77.
- 40 Berkeley 99.
- 41 Blake, *Heaven and Hell* 33
- 42 Eliot, "Journey of the Magi," *Selected Poems* 98
- 43 Blake, *Heaven and Hell* 34
- 44 McDowell 152.

## Chapter Four

### A Clear Design: The Novels

- <sup>1</sup> William H. Slavick, introduction, xvii.
- <sup>2</sup> Jimmar Clark, personal interview, 15 July 1980.
- James Smith, cited by Nadine Brewer in "Home to the Heart of Kentucky," *National Geographic Magazine* 161:4 (April, 1982) 535.
- <sup>4</sup> Wescott 13.

\* George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, ed. Robert Merrihew Adams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Ind., 1979) 39.

\* Berkeley 93.

\* Jung, "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," 534

\* Jung 537.

\* Jung 535.

\* Jung 539.

\* Rovit 27.

\* Rovit 29.

\* Eliot, "The Hollow Men," *Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1936) 80.

\* Lewis P. Simpson, "The Sexuality of History," *The Southern Review* 20 (Oct. 1984) 802.

\* Simpson 800.

\* Simpson 797.

\* Rovit 48.

\* Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Alastor*, Heath 796.

\* Rovit 59.

\* Eliot 80.

\* Simpson 797.

\* Rovit 88.

\* Auchincloss 133

\* Knight 13.

\* Niles.

\* Knight 13.

\* Niles.

## Conclusion

Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," 67.

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, 64.

Shelley 883.

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Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," *Critical Theory since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971) 512.

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